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PRESS RELEASE

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All Blacks try their hand at Paralympic sport Goalball with AIG, Endeavour Fund and RNIB

November 3, 2017 – Insurer AIG UK invited five members of the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team to experience sport with a visual impairment by competing in the Paralympic sport of Goalball. The rugby players wore eyeshades and were pitted against players from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and the Endeavour Fund, as well as AIG employees.

The New Zealand All Blacks rugby team participated in this event to raise awareness of the power of sport as a tool for recovery and rehabilitation, ahead of their match against the Barbarians at Twickenham tomorrow (Saturday, November 4, 2017). RNIB and Endeavour fund are both charity partners of AIG.

Goalball is a team sport for athletes with visual impairments, originally devised in 1946 as a means of assisting the rehabilitation of visually impaired World War II veterans. It is played by two teams of three using a ball with bells inside. The object of the game is to throw the ball into the opposing team's net, while defenders attempt to block it with their bodies.

After meeting their opponents and being introduced to the sport with a skills and drills session, the All Blacks and AIG employees experienced first-hand what it is like to play a sport designed for people with sight loss. With all players wearing eyeshades in order for them to compete on an equal footing, four teams went head-to-head in a thrilling series of matches, with All Black Ardie Savea's team winning the day.

Sarah Davies, Corporate Citizenship and Events Manager at AIG said:

"AIG is proud of its partnerships with the RNIB and Endeavour Fund, as well as its status as Official Insurance Partner of the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team. We're delighted to bring together our partnerships to create this unique experience for wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women, people with sight loss, AIG employees and the All Blacks, celebrating the power of sport when used as a recovery tool for those who are wounded or have lost their sight. I found today truly inspiring and would like to thank everyone involved."

Georgie Bullen, Director at Team Insight, who facilitated the session, which included visual impairment awareness training, said:

"We are delighted to be asked by AIG to be involved in this event. Today not only highlights the power that sport possesses in aiding recovery, but also its ability to unite people from all different backgrounds, abilities and disabilities. We are so excited to bring together such a cross section of participants; visually impaired, wounded veterans and members of The All Blacks, and have them learn and compete alongside each other."



“We are always so keen to spread the message of Goalball ; the sport was created after WWII to aid in the rehabilitation of blinded veterans and therefore fits perfectly with AIG’s message of the power of sport.”

Harry Meade, RNIB Corporate Partnerships Manager, said:

“It’s fantastic that through our partnership with AIG we’re able to give people with sight loss the opportunity to enjoy experiences such as playing goalball alongside members of the All Blacks rugby team. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I’m sure will live in memories forever, and we’re extremely grateful to AIG for making it happen.

“It was great to see everyone getting involved and I hope that playing goalball helped the All Blacks to get a sense of what it might be like to live with sight loss and challenge some of the myths and misconceptions encountered by blind and partially sighted people.”

Stuart Croxford, Endeavour Fund Programme Manager at The Royal Foundation, said:

“It’s fantastic for the Endeavour Fund to be invited to yet another great AIG event after the success of the wheelchair rugby last year. With the valued partnership between AIG and the Endeavour Fund, we are able to support wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women to use sporting challenges as an important part of their rehabilitation and transition from the armed forces. To see them take on the All Blacks rugby team on a level playing field is an amazing opportunity and I know they are extremely excited about it.”

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Notes to editors

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