

[ IN CONVERSATION WITH ]

# OWEN FARRELL

As a player central to the England and Saracens rugby union teams – and the face of Hackett's A/W 17 campaign – Owen Farrell is refreshingly humble. Here are his tips on how best to limber up for a game, and how to cook an unorthodox Christmas dinner

WORDS: HANNAH LEMON

**W**ith the recent announcement of the 2019 Rugby World Cup fixtures, pressure is building on England's union team on how best to prepare. And nobody seems better placed to tell us than Owen Farrell. Born in Lancashire, the 26-year-old fly-half started playing league aged eight, but soon followed his father's footsteps and transferred to union at 14. Three years later he was signed to the Saracens and has gone on to be the team's all-time leading point scorer. This year alone he was named European Player of the Year at the European Champions Cup, helped England retain the Six Nations cup alongside fellow fly-half and childhood friend George North, and scored the most points of any player in the Lions tour.

**Do you have any rituals before a game?**

**OF:** I wouldn't call them rituals, but I used to have a specific routine. Now I try to test myself not to do it. I've managed to convince myself that it doesn't make a difference.

**Are you ever struck by nerves before you walk onto a pitch?**

**OF:** Yeah, but there are different ways of getting nervous. Excited, I guess. Excited and nervous, which is a good thing I think.

**You have the signature head tilt you perform before each kick - is that just for show?**

**OF:** People think I'm being a bit weird

but there is logic to it. I draw a line from the ball to where I want to hit it, and it's that trajectory of the ball I try and kick.

**Is that something that you were taught?**

**OF:** I've seen other people do it and I kind of liked it.

**At one point you were the youngest person ever to play English professional rugby. What's it like having new, young players coming through the ranks?**

**OF:** Brilliant. I think younger players are getting better and better, both skill-wise and athletically. I don't see myself as a mentor, though. I just share the experiences I've had. I don't set aside time to sit down and talk about that sort of thing, it just happens pretty naturally by chatting.

**What is your fitness routine?**

**OF:** Being part of a team, you have a schedule laid out for you. We do things a little bit differently to most, I'd say. We have one day a week where we don't have to go in, but we train a bit more intensely on the day before so we can take a breather before a game and feel fresh for it. We're surrounded by people who know a lot more about fitness than we do, so we just leave it to them.

**What's your diet like?**

**OF:** I try to be as balanced as I can. A lot of our meals are at the club so the food is

brilliant and ready for us, whatever we need. Like anything, you try and have a balance to it and make sure you don't go crazy, but as long as you feel like you're in good condition then it's not too bad.

**How do you avoid injury?**

**OF:** Knowing what works for you is massively important and knowing your body. Our routine doesn't change too much, so my body's quite used to it. On top of all the normal fitness, everybody does things that works for them, whether it's stretching or more 'prehabilitation' and injury protection. You just figure stuff out along the way.

**What are you doing for Christmas Day? Have you ever cooked for the family?**

**OF:** I think we're at my house, and no, never! If I'm cooking, I think there'll have to be a trial run. I might do it on the barbeque. I've got one of those Big Green Eggs.

**Do you get a break from training during the holidays?**

**OF:** Saracens have a game against Leicester Tigers on Christmas Eve, so I'll have the next day off. But the build-up will be exactly like any other week, I guess. Hopefully, I'll be able to enjoy Christmas Day! 🍷

*Owen Farrell is the new face of Hackett's A/W 17 collection with Fox Brothers, [hackett.com](http://hackett.com)*

