

RUGBY WORLD CUP 2019

In the Matter of a Red Card issued to Sébastien Vaahaamahina of France (the “Player”) during the match between Wales and France on Sunday 20th October 2019 at Oita Stadium

Summary Decision of the Judicial Committee — Mike Hamlin (England - Chair), David Croft (Australia, former international player) and Leon Lloyd (England, former international player)

The Committee determined that the Player intentionally elbowed Aaron Wainwright in the face in the 48th minute of the RWC quarter final match between Wales and France in Oita, Japan, on 20th October 2019. By his own admission his actions were intentional and deliberate. Having taken into account all the evidence relating to the incident, including the evidence and submissions on behalf of the Player, including his own impressive evidence the Committee found:

1. The act of foul play was intentional.
2. Aaron Wainwright suffered no injury visible or otherwise.
3. Striking another player with an elbow is a serious act and could have resulted in serious injury, fortunately in this case there was none.
4. Aaron Wainwright was vulnerable. There was also an element of a cheap shot about the Player’s conduct.

Taking into account the above factors the Committee categorised the offending as top end with a starting entry point of 10 weeks. Absent any injury, the Committee declined to increase the top end entry point of 10 weeks.

Pursuant to Regulation 17.19.5 the Committee made the following findings:-

1. The Player’s acknowledgment of guilt and timing was immediate, both oral and written.
2. The Player had one relevant disciplinary transgression for foul play, in the Top 14 season 17/18 he was suspended 3 weeks for striking with his hand.
3. The Player is not young nor inexperienced, having played 46 games for France and is 28 years of age.
4. His conduct before and during the hearing was exemplary. Indeed Mr Rutherford commented on the Player’s candid acknowledgment of his full culpability including that this was not standard mid-range offending.
5. Remorse was expressed immediately.
6. The Player had acknowledged issues post October 2018 by undertaking certain specialist training. Furthermore, pursuant to 17.19.5 (f), being sent off in RWC quarter final for this Player will have a significant impact both personally and in France. He will be forever remembered for being the French player to be sent off in the 2019 World Cup which probably cost France a semi-final place.

Accordingly, we allow 35% for mitigating factors which results in a 4-week deduction from the entry point of 10 weeks. Accordingly. The Player is suspended from 20/10/2019 until midnight on 15/12/2019. He is free to play again on 16th December 2019.

Mike Hamlin

David Croft

Leon Lloyd.

24/10/2019