

RFU SHORT JUDGMENT FORM



Match	London Irish	Vs	Bristol Bears
Club's Level	1	Competition	Gallagher Premiership
Date of Match	21/02/21	Match Venue	Brentwood Community Stadium

Particulars of Offence			
Player's Surname	BEDLOW	Date of Birth	08/08/1995
Forename(s)	Samuel	Plea	Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Admitted <input type="checkbox"/>
Club name	Bristol Bears	RFU ID No.	349543
Type of Offence	Tip tackle.		
Law 9 Offence	9.18		
Sanction	3 week suspension.		

Hearing Details			
Hearing Date	23/02/01	Hearing venue	Remote
Chairmen/SJO	Jeremy Summers	Panel Member 1	Jamie Corsi
Panel Member 2	Chris Skaife	Panel Secretary	Rebecca Morgan
Appearance Player	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Appearance Club	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Player's Representative(s):	Other attendees:
Dave Attwood, player (representing the Player) Pat Lam, Director of Rugby Mark Tainton, CEO Nick Fenton-Wells, Team Manager	Angus Hetherington, RFU David Barnes, RFU (observing)

List of documents/materials provided to player in advance of hearing:
Charge Sheet Citing Commissioner's Report RFU Regulation 19, Appendix 2 Match footage On behalf of the Player, the Panel also considered a letter from Mr Fenton-Wells dated 22 February 2021 and additional footage.

The Citing Commissioner (Nick Wood) cited the Player as follows:

"London Irish attack from a lineout in the second minute of the game, passing the ball to the midfield. L10 misses the short line of L7 in order to pass to L12, who then passes the ball inside for L11 to run through a gap in the Bristol defence. Bristol 12 is the man who ends up tackling L12 shortly after the ball is passed. B12 is fully committed to the tackle on L12 and it is not late, as L12 has only just released the ball inside. B12 is bent at the waist and has his arms wrapped around the legs of L12. The start point of the tackle is not illegal. However, B12 continues through with the tackle, lifting both legs of L12 above the horizontal, to the extent that L12's boots are vertical. B12 does not drive L12 into the ground but he does drop him to cause an uncontrolled landing - both L12's feet are still off the ground as he hits the ground. L12 lands on his upper back/left shoulder, with the back of his head thrown into the ground. After a review with the TMO, the referee issues a yellow card to B12. However, on careful examination of the incident, the actions of B12 warrant a red card. He lifted both L12's legs above the horizontal, causing a dangerous landing on the upper back/shoulder, with the back of L12's head thrown into the ground. Therefore, there is a high degree of danger. B12 did not drive L12 into the ground, but he did release L12 whilst he was still in the air, failing to bring him to ground safely. Both L12's feet are in the air as he hits the ground. DECISION: FULL CITING"

As noted the incident occurred very early in the match (2nd minute) for which both the weather and ground conditions were good.

The match footage was reviewed, which was consistent with the above narrative. London Irish attack from a line out into the middle of the field close to the half way line. The Player initially makes a legal tackle, wrapping both arms around L12 but then lifts him through the horizontal from where he falls to the ground landing initially on his left shoulder with his head then hitting the ground simultaneously/immediately thereafter. The Player remains in full contact with L12 until shortly before he makes contact with the ground, in effect dropping him from the contact. The attack continues through several further phases, before play is stopped for a separate penalty. At that juncture a foul play review of the incident is conducted.

In discussing the incident, the Referee and TMO appear to focus on the fact that the Player has not driven L12 into the ground and that the initial contact was with the top of the shoulder rather than the head.

The Panel considered the following medical report:

"This is to certify that I was working as pitchside physiotherapist for the London Irish versus Bristol Bears match on Sunday 21.02.21 at Brentford Community Stadium. I did not witness the tackle event but at the next break in play the player involved Theo Brophy Clews requested to have his finger strapped as he was bleeding. While I was strapping his finger I saw the replay of the tackle and then asked the player if he had any head injury symptoms which he replied that "I was a bit stunned for a second or two but am absolutely fine". Chatting to the player over the next minute or two I was happy that there was no reason for a Head Injury Assessment (HIA).

When I came off the pitch our Team Doctor Dr Vicann During asked me if there was any concern with Theo as the Independent Match Day Doctor had flagged that he landed awkwardly on his head and wished to know what were the on pitch clinical findings. We were all happy that the player involved did not need a HIA. He played the rest of the game with no problems and had no issues either post game or indeed this morning on assessment."

Summary of Player's Evidence

The Player gave evidence. He confirmed his acceptance that he had committed an act of foul play that had warranted the issue of a red card.

He had been appointed defensive captain and had wanted to set an example to the rest of the team. He had noted the red cards issued over the weekend and had therefore deliberately gone low into the tackle. He knew by the force of the contact that LI12 had off loaded and, rather than drive through into the tackle, which would have "caused niggles" he had attempted to stop and pull out of the tackle. This had then caused LI12 to twist and be taken through the horizontal.

He drew the Panel's attention to another clip of a similar tackle later in the game, where his execution had been better and so no lift had resulted. In his view, this showed exactly the same process whereby he had fully wrapped his arms around the ball carrier. In this second incident he had known that the ball had been carried into the contact and so he had wanted to dominate the tackle, which had not been his intention in the incident in question.

On behalf of the Player, Mr Attwood submitted that the Player was not a niggly character and that niggly tackles were not part of Bears culture. He noted that there had been no reaction from London Irish, and whilst he accepted that the match officials had ultimately come to the wrong decision, they were highly experienced and had taken nearly 90 seconds to come to a view, which reflected that the position was not clear and obvious.

In his submission, the offending should be assessed as being Low End. The player is 25 and has been with the club through the Academy for 7 years. This was his first disciplinary infraction.

On behalf of the RFU, Mr Hetherington submitted that the offending should be viewed as having been a reckless incident due to poor technique, and as such did not urge a finding beyond a Low End entry point assessment. No aggravating features were present and mitigation was a matter for the Panel to determine.

Findings of Fact

The Panel carefully considered all the evidence and submissions. Having done so it made the following findings:

1. The incident began as a lawful tackle with the Player fully wrapping both arms around LI12.
2. The dynamic of the contact then saw the Player lift LI12 through the horizontal with his left arm leading.
3. LI 12 continues into a near vertical position with his feet pointing upwards, and at this juncture the Player remains fully in contact with him.
4. Shortly before LI12 comes into the contact with the ground, the Player has released his grip, effectively dropping LI12 to the ground.
5. The Player does not however drive LI12 into the ground.
6. LI12's shoulder make first contact with the pitch, although contact with the head then follows almost instantaneously.
7. LI12 gets up quickly and is involved in the attack again shortly afterwards.
8. No injury was sustained.

Decision

Breach admitted Proven Not Proven Other Disposal (please state below)

On the Player's own admission, and having regard to the evidence, he had lifted an opponent off the ground and dropped him so that his upper body and head had made dangerous contact with the ground. This was an act of foul play that had warranted the issue of a red card.

SANCTIONING PROCESS



Assessment of Seriousness

Assessment of intent - Ref 19.11.8

PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX

19.11.8(a) Intentional/deliberate

19.11.8(b) Reckless

Reasons for finding as to intent:

This was a poorly executed tackle but devoid of any malice. The Player in lifting and then dropping L12 should have known that there was a risk of foul play arising and was reckless as to that risk.

Gravity of player's actions - Reg 19.11.8(c)

Taking an opponent through the horizontal and then dropping them to the ground is inherently serious given the risk of serious injury that can arise.

Nature of actions - Reg 19.11.8(d)

Poorly executed tip tackle as described above.

Existence of provocation - Reg 19.11.8(e)

None.

Whether player retaliated - Reg 19.11.8(f)

Not relevant to the offending.

Self-defence - Reg 19.11.8(g)

Not relevant to the offending.

Effect on victim - Reg 19.11.8(h)

No injury was sustained.

Effect on match - Reg 19.11.8(i)

None.

Vulnerability of victim - Reg 19.11.8(j)

L112 was placed in an inherently vulnerable position.

Level of participation/premeditation - Reg 19.11.8(k)

No premeditation.

Conduct completed/attempted - Reg 19.11.8(l)

Completed.

Other features of player's conduct - Reg 19.11.8(m)

None.

Assessment of Seriousness Continued

Entry point

<u>Low-end</u>	<u>Weeks</u>	<u>Mid-range</u>	<u>Weeks</u>	<u>Top-end*</u>	<u>Weeks</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

*If Top End, the JO or Panel should identify, if appropriate, an entry point between the Top End and the maximum sanction and provide the reasons for selecting this entry point, below.
In making this assessment, the JO/committee should be consider RFU Regulation 19

Reasons for selecting entry point:

This was a reckless offence resulting from poor technique where, fortunately, no injury was sustained. The Player had not intended to lift L112 and, as noted, the tackle had started off entirely legally. The Panel however gave careful consideration to whether the offending needed to be assessed as Mid Range, but was satisfied that it was correctly characterised as Low End.

Additional Relevant Off-Field Aggravating Factors - Reg 19.11.10

Player's status as an offender of the laws of the game - Reg 19.11.10 (a)

Not relevant.

Need for deterrent to combat a pattern of offending - Reg 19.11.10(b)

None.

Any other off-field aggravating factor that the disciplinary panel considers relevant and appropriate - Reg 19.11.10 (c)

None.

Number of additional weeks: 0

Relevant Off-Field Mitigating Factors	
Acknowledgement of guilt and timing - Reg 19.11.11(a)	Player's disciplinary record/good character - Reg 19.11.11(b)
Full and unequivocal.	Player had a previously clear record.
Youth and inexperience of player - Reg 19.11.11(c)	Conduct prior to and at hearing - Reg 19.11.11(d)
Not relevant.	Befitting an elite level player.
Remorse and timing of Remorse - Reg 19.11.11(e)	Other off-field mitigation - Reg 19.11.11(f)
Genuine and prompt.	None.

Number of weeks deducted: 3

Summary of reason for number of weeks deducted:

Given his clear record and his plea in particular, the Player was entitled to receive the maximum 50% credit for the mitigation that was available to him.

Games for meaningful sanctions:

The Player will miss the following Gallagher Premiership games:

Leicester, 27/02/21
Worcester, 06/03/21
Wasps, 12/03/21

Sanction

NOTE: PLAYER ORDERED OFF ARE PROVISIONALLY SUSPENDED PENDING THE HEARING OF THEIR CASE, SUCH SUSPENSION SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN SANCTIONING

Total sanction	3 weeks	Sending off sufficient	
Sanction commences	21/02/21		
Sanctions concludes	15/03/21		
Free to play	16/03/21		
Final date to lodge appeal	25/02/21		
Costs (please refer to Reg 19, Appendix 3 for full cost details)	£500		

Signature (JO or Chairman)	Jeremy Summers	Date	24/02/21
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NOTE: YOU HAVE THE RIGHT OF APPEAL AGAINST THIS DECISION AS SET OUT IN REGULATION 19.12 OF THE DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS. YOUR ATTENTION IS SPECIFICALLY DRAWN TO THE TIME LIMIT AND DIRECTIONS/REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO AN APPEAL SET OUT IN REGULATION 19.12.9