

RFU SHORT JUDGMENT FORM



Match	London Irish	Vs	Saracens RFC
Club's Level	Level 1	Competition	Gallagher Premiership
Date of Match	19/02/2022	Match Venue	London Irish

Particulars of Offence			
Player's Surname	Coleman	Date of Birth	07/10/1991
Forename(s)	Adam	Plea	Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Club name	London Irish	RFU ID No.	2548483
Type of Offence	Red Card		
Law 9 Offence	9.13 - Dangerous Tackling		
Sanction	Red card rescinded, no alternative sanction imposed		

Hearing Details			
Hearing Date	22/02/2022	Hearing venue	By Video
Chairmen/SJO	Matthew Weaver	Panel Member 1	Becky Essex
Panel Member 2	Carl Bradshaw	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:
Alex James (London Irish) Declan Kidney (London Irish)	Angus Hetherington (RFU)

List of documents/materials provided to player in advance of hearing:
Charge Sheet Referee's report World Rugby Head Contact Process Guidelines RFU Regulation 19 Letter from Saracens on condition of S11 Account of incident from London Irish Photograph of Player after the match Video footage (x 2)

The Referee's report refers to the incident as follows:

Saracens (S) were in possession of the ball and S11, ball carrier, made a break down the left wing and entered the London Irish (LI) 22. The offending player (LI5) approached to make a tackle, he had an unimpeded view of the ball carrier. LI5 was upright in the tackle and in making the tackle made head contact with the ball carrier, both players went down following the collision and immediately received medical treatment. The play was stopped and the teams separated. I reviewed the tackle with my team of match officials and TMO and found that the tackler was upright, there was head to head contact, with a high degree of force. The mitigation of S11's change in direction was considered but I deemed it insufficient to mitigate the challenge from Red to Yellow. Following the review I explained the decision to both captains and as the offending player was still being treated by medical staff, issued a RC away from the player. The player then left the field and the game continued.

The video footage shows S11 with the ball, beating his defender on the outside, near the touchline. S11 then cuts inside off his left foot. The Player is covering across to make a tackle and just before contact, S11 steps off his right foot and spins into contact. The Player and S11 make upper body contact and both fall away from the incident and require medical attention immediately thereafter.

The video footage shows the incident clearly and shows, apparently as the first point of contact, S11's shoulder contacting the Player's jaw. However, it is not definitive as to whether there was head to head contact between the players. After the contact, S11 is seen to fall to ground, making contact with his head on L14 on the way down.

The medical information from Saracens states as follows:

Following an on-field collision we attended to Alex Lewington – due to players presentation on the pitch (dazed / groggy) – the medical team called an Immediate Removal under Criteria 1 of the HIA process, meaning a permanent removal from the pitch, which was agreed upon with the IMDD Mike Forsythe. Following medical clearance, Alex was able to walk from the pitch. He carried out a HIA2 post game – in which he has demonstrated no symptoms and a return to his baseline concussion testing. He has remained symptom free since immediately after the game.

As an immediate removal under Criteria 1 of HIA process – we will carryout a GRTP in line with protocols. Due to the club having no game this weekend (26/27th Feb) – the player is expected to be available for selection early next week + available to play after 10 days.

Barring any issues arising, we are currently expecting this to be an uncomplicated GRTP process for the player involved.

There were no other injuries treated in relation to this incident.

Summary of Player's Evidence

The document from London Irish refers to the incident as follows:

Account of Incident – Adam Coleman's attempted tackle on Alex Lewington / Rugby Incident

*Minute 76 of Match Clock

LI5 (lock) is covering ground and take space of attacking S11 (wing)

S11 (wing) steps off left foot

LI5 (lock) lowers height to make a left sided tackle

S11 (wing) suddenly steps off his right foot and spins into contact

S11 (wing) point of shoulder makes contact with LI5 (lock) chin

LI5 (lock) is immediately knocked backwards away from S11 (wing) / no contact is made to head of S11 (wing)

The dynamic nature of the impact knocks both players off their feet

S11 (wing) head hits the back of LI14 as he falls

Medical Response

The immediate medical response to both players are excellent

S11 – HIA Removal, correct due to the force of the contact although we can prove no head contact by LI15 (note S11 hits head on LI14)

Reference to Head Contact Process - The need for HIA does not necessarily mean that there has been illegal head contact

The Match Officials Decision

The dynamic nature of the impact

LI5 and S11 being removed

These factors mean we understand the Match Official's decision in game

Footage Submitted

Clear evidence that the point of contact was with S11 Point of Shoulder hitting LI5 Chin

No Contact to S11 Head by LI5

Medical Report

S11 - HIA 2 passed, this was administered immediately after the match

No injury sustained to S11

The Player's evidence was that was attempting to make a cover tackle and had covered the ground quickly. He prepared to make a left shoulder tackle but as S11 stepped off his right foot and spun into contact, the Player felt S11's shoulder make contact with his jaw. This knocked him unconscious and he fell backwards. He did not recall feeling any contact on S11's head.

On the Player's behalf, the Panel were asked to look at the video footage which it was said did not show head on head contact, as the Referee had found, but showed an initial, high-force contact between S11's shoulder and the Player's jaw. It was said that even if there was secondary contact between the players' heads after that initial contact, it was indirect and of sufficiently low force that it did not merit a red card and did not, therefore, meet the red card threshold.

The RFU accepted that this was a difficult case and that whilst there was plainly contact between S11's shoulder and the Player's jaw, the Panel needed to determine whether there was also head to head contact of sufficient force to warrant a red card. It was accepted that if there was no head to head contact or minimal contact, a red card was not warranted.

Findings of Fact

Under RFU Regulations 19.5.1.1 and 19.11.1, the Panel can only overturn a red card if satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Referee was wrong either as to mistaken identity or where the Panel consider that the red card threshold is not met.

The Panel agreed with the RFU that this was a difficult case. The Panel considered the submissions made and the Player's evidence. In addition, the Panel considered the video footage in detail, watching it at full speed and frame by frame on a number of occasions. Despite spending some time reviewing the footage, whilst it was entirely possible that there was some head to head contact, the footage was not sufficiently clear to enable the Panel to be satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that there was head to head contact. The initial contact was clearly S11's shoulder to the Player's jaw. Whilst the dynamics of the incident and the position of the Player's head in the attempted tackle made head to head contact a very real possibility, it was not possible to determine this with any degree of certainty from the footage. The Panel did not have evidence from S11 as to the mechanics of the incident and the point of contact.

In the circumstances, therefore, it is clear that this incident was an extremely difficult one for the Referee, who had far less time to review the footage and could not do so in the detail which was afforded to the Panel. In the circumstances, therefore, both the Panel and London Irish completely understood why the Referee viewed the incident as a red card.

However, what the footage does suggest is that head to head contact may not have occurred but if it did, it was secondary to the shoulder to jaw initial contact and, as such, was indirect contact with the head and at a relatively low force (the majority of the force being taken by the initial contact). The Referee's decision was based on a finding of "direct head to head contact" and he does not appear to have been aware of the initial shoulder contact and therefore did not factor that into his decision. Whilst this was entirely understandable on the information he had available, closer scrutiny of the video footage suggests, on balance, that this was wrong.

In the circumstances, therefore, whilst it is possible that there was head to head contact, the Panel were satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the contact was primarily shoulder to jaw and that any subsequent head to head contact was indirect and of relatively low force. As such, whilst absolutely no criticism is made of the Referee in that regard, the decision to issue a red card was wrong as the incident did not meet the red card threshold.

The Panel, therefore, rescind the red card.

By majority, the Panel were satisfied that even if there was head to head contact, the indirect nature of it and the relatively low force did not warrant a yellow card.

Decision

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

The Panel considered that the red card threshold had not been met and, as such, the red card should be rescinded.

No alternative sanction is to be imposed.

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SANCTIONING PROCESS



Assessment of Seriousness

Assessment of intent - Ref 19.11.8

PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX

19.11.8(a) Intentional

19.11.8(b) Reckless

Reasons for finding as to intent:

Nature of actions - Reg 19.11.8(c)

Existence of provocation - Reg 19.11.8(d)

Whether player retaliated - Reg 19.11.8(e)

Self-defence - Reg 19.11.8(f)

Effect on victim - Reg 19.11.8(g)

Effect on match - Reg 19.11.8(h)

Vulnerability of victim - Reg 19.11.8(i)

Level of participation/premeditation - Reg 19.11.8(j)

Conduct completed/attempted - Reg 19.11.8(k)

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

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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 type="checkbox"/>		<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 the above assessment, the Panel should consider the RFU Practice Note as set out in Appendix 5 to Regulation 19. Significant weight should be given to RFU regulation 19.11.8(a), 19.11.8(h) and 19.11.8(i).

Reasons for selecting entry point:

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Relevant Off-Field Mitgating Factors - Reg 19.11.10

Acknowledgment of the commission of foul Play & timing - Reg 19.11.10(a)	Player's disciplinary record - Reg 19.11.10(b)
Youth and/or inexperience of player - Reg 19.11.10(c)	Conduct prior to and at hearing - Reg 19.11.10(d)

Remorse and timing of Remorse - Reg 19.11.10(e)	Other off-field mitigation - Reg 19.11.10(f)

Number of weeks deducted:

Summary of reason for number of weeks deducted:

Additional Relevant Off-Field Aggravating Factors - RFU Regulation 19.11.13
Player's status as an offender of the laws of the game - Reg 19.11.13 (a)
Need for deterrent to combat a pattern of offending - Reg 19.11.13(b)
Any other off-field aggravating factor that the disciplinary panel considers relevant and appropriate - (including poor conduct prior to or at the hearing) Reg 19.11.13 (c)

Number of additional weeks:

Games for meaningful sanctions:

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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		Sending off sufficient	
Sanction commences			
Sanctions concludes			
Free to play	With immediate effect		
Final date to lodge appeal	24.02.2022		
Costs (please refer to Reg 19, Appendix 3 for full cost details)	None		

Signature (JO or Chairman)	Matthew Weaver	Date	22/02/2022
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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

ANY PERSON SUSPENDED UNDER THESE REGULATIONS IS REMINDED THAT UNDER RFU REGULATION 19.11.16 THE SUSPENDED PERSON MAY NOT PLAY THE GAME (OR ANY FORM THEREOF) OR BE INVOLVED IN ANY ON-FIELD MATCH DAY ACTIVITIES ANYWHERE WHICH INCLUDES (BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO) ACTING AS WATER CARRIER/ RUNNING ON A TEE ETC