

DISCIPLINARY DECISION



Match	Wales v Ireland		
Player's Union	IRFU	Competition	Six Nations 2025
Date of Match	22 February 2025	Match venue	Principality Stadium
Applicable rules	2025 SIX NATIONS DISCIPLINARY AND ANTI-DOPING RULES		

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE			
Player's Surname	Ringrose	Player's Forename(s)	Garry
Player's Date of birth	26 January 1995	Referee's Name	Christophe Ridley
Foul play	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not admitted	Red card warranted	<input type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not admitted
Offence	9.13 – dangerous tackle	SELECT: Red card <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citing <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If "Other" selected, please specify:	
Summary of sanction	3 weeks (reduced to 2 weeks upon successful completion of the World Rugby Coaching Intervention Plan ("CIP"))		

HEARING DETAILS			
Hearing date	27 February 2025	Hearing venue	Zoom call
Chairman/JO	Matthew Weaver KC		
Other members of Disciplinary Committee	Stefan Terblanche (ex-South Africa international) Leon Lloyd (ex-England international)		
Appearance Player	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Appearance Player's union	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Player's representative(s)	Derek Hegarty	Disciplinary Officer and/or other attendees	Tom Price
List of documents/ materials provided to Player in advance of hearing	FPRO Red Card Report Referee's Red Card Report FPRO Incident Form Letter from Ben Thomas (W12) Letter from Dr Geoff Davies (WRU Team Doctor) World Rugby HCP World Rugby 2024-25 HCP/Foul Play Calibration Process December clips Player's response to standing directions E-mail from IRFU confirming the Player's upcoming fixtures		

SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CITING/REFEREE'S REPORT/INCIDENT FOOTAGE

The FPRO Red Card Report describes the incident as follows:

“At minute 32:56 of the first half the Irish player n. 13 (Garry Ringrose) made a dangerous tackle on the Welsh player n. 12.

During the tackle the Irish player made a direct head contact with the Welsh player's head.

The Welsh player, who was carrying the ball, made no sudden and significant change of direction or height.”

The Referee's Red Card Report describes the incident as follows:

“On the 34th minute the TMO initiated a formal review for a head contact. After reviewing the incident on field, it was determined that Ireland 13s actions were foul play due to him not attempting to lower his height enough and due to the force it met our yellow card threshold. The bunker upgraded this to a 20 minute red card for a high degree of danger with no mitigation.”

The video footage of the incident shows the incident from a number of angles, in close up and as part of a wider frame, and at full speed and in slow motion. The footage shows the incident clearly. W12 receives the ball from W9 and catches it into his stomach. The Player has a clear line of sight to W12 and moves forward in the defensive line, from out to in, to make a tackle. As the Player approaches W12, W12 moves his weight onto his right foot and then onto his left foot. The Player prepares to make a tackle and moves towards W12, placing his right foot on the ground. The Player does not place his left foot firmly on the ground as one might expect, but his feet appear to slip from under him (he did not in fact slip as he explained to the Panel) and he made contact with W12's upper body, the two players' heads coming into direct contact.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF OTHER EVIDENCE (e.g. medical reports)

A letter from the WRU Team Doctor, Dr Geoff Davies, confirms as follows:

“Myself and Welsh Physio, Prav Mathema, attended to Red 12 (Ben Thomas) on the field of play during the Wales V Ireland game on Saturday 22nd February. This was following a collision with Ireland no. 13.

There was no clinical evidence of significant injury.

In particular there was no evidence of cervical or facial injury and no evidence of concussion. We were happy for him to return to play.”

SUMMARY OF PLAYER'S EVIDENCE

The Player took the Panel through the footage of the incident in some detail. He described his thought process, the decisions he was required to make and his intentions thoroughly. With the assistance of Mr Hegarty and Simon Easterby, the Player described how, following a carry by W5, he had scanned the attacking line of Wales and identified that Ireland had more numbers in defence and, therefore, a superior position.

Having watched W10 signal with his right arm and W9 take two steps to his right before passing, he identified that W12 was the likely ball carrier. He described how he identified that Wales did not have sufficient numbers outside of W12 and having seen W12 catch the ball into his chest, he considered that W12 was likely to cut back inside into contact. Ireland 12 was inside the Player in the defensive line and W12's intention was to make a strong tackle on W12 from outside to in, allowing Ireland 12 to then compete for the ball on the ground.

On receiving the ball, W12 placed his right foot on the ground firmly, moving his body weight to the left. He then quickly placed his left foot on the ground to move his weight back to the right immediately before the Player made contact with him. The Player described how, given his long experience of defending in similar situations and the work done in training on defence, he assumed that W12, after stepping on his right foot initially, would continue his momentum inside and towards Ireland 12. He therefore prepared to make a tackle on W12 in that position, targeting just under the ball and, in all likelihood, contacting W12 around his right elbow.

The effect of W12's step onto his left foot and shift of body weight was to change the direction of his momentum with the result that W12 did not continue inside towards Ireland 12. As such, having not anticipated that W12 would step off his left foot, when the Player carried out the tackle as he had intended, instead of making contact around W12's right elbow, his head came into direct contact with W12's head.

Immediately before the contact, the Player described that what looked like a slip on his part on the video footage was, in fact, the Player recognising that he was not in the correct position to make a legal tackle and so avoided planting his left foot and, instead, allowed himself to fall to his knees to reduce the force of the inevitable contact.

In short, the Player's account of the incident was that had W12 continued on his trajectory having initially stepped off his right foot, the Player would have executed a legal tackle. That being so, it was W12's sudden and significant (and unexpected) change of direction (the step onto his left foot and shift of body weight) that stopped his momentum abruptly and led to the collision and the head on head contact.

The Player also submitted that the degree of danger in the incident was low, not high, therefore not meriting a red card. It was said that actions taken by the Player to slow his own momentum and reduce the force in the tackle, the absence of any injury to either player (or requirement for an HIA), and the fact that the Player fell backwards and not forwards after the impact are all indicators of a low force and therefore low danger collision.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Under rule 2.5.19 of the 2025 Six Nations Disciplinary and Anti-Doping Rules (“the Rules”), the Player must persuade the Panel on the balance of probabilities that the decision to award a red card was wrong in order to successfully overturn the red card. The role of the Panel is not to re-referee the incident but, rather, to review the decision of the match official to award a red card. Only if that decision was wrong, can the Panel overturn the red card.

The Panel reviewed the video footage and considered carefully the evidence given by the Player and the submissions made on his behalf. The Panel were impressed with the Player’s honesty and his attention to detail in taking the Panel through the incident carefully and in great detail. The Panel were left in no doubt that the Player intended to make a strong but fair tackle on W12 and had attempted to process each of the variables in a live tackle situation before committing to the tackle.

Having reviewed the footage, it was apparent to the Panel that the Player had a clear line of sight to W12 and sufficient time to prepare for the tackle and avoid an act of foul play. W12 shifted his body weight after receiving the ball and had, shortly before the tackle, stepped on to his left foot and moved his body weight away from the direction he was initially travelling. However, such shifts in body weight did not, as a matter of fact, cause W12 to move significantly. The footage makes clear that whilst W12 shifted his weight immediately before the collision, he was not moving at any great speed and the changes in body weight did not cause his upper body to move significantly.

The Panel were shown an incident involving Theo Dan of England and Anton Lienert-Brown of New Zealand which was said to be comparable and for which World Rugby had suggested that the appropriate sanction was a yellow card. In that incident, Theo Dan was travelling at speed towards Anton Lienert-Brown before stepping hard off his right foot to change direction and eventually end up moving in a different direction. This incident was different to that one in as much as, unlike Theo Dan, W12 was not moving at any great speed and his position did not alter significantly. As such, whilst W12 did move before impact, his movements cannot properly be described as significant. It is also the case that, unlike in the Theo Dan incident, W12’s movements did not appear to the Panel to be contributing factor to the foul play which was a result of the Player wrongly anticipating the direction of W12’s movement and committing to a tackle based on those assumptions.

The application of mitigation for a significant and sudden change in direction is intended to reflect the fact that in some circumstances, a change in direction of a ball carrier can be a causative factor in a dangerous tackle. Here, that was not the case and, as such, the Panel were not satisfied that the match official had been wrong to conclude that sufficient mitigation did not exist to merit a reduction in the sanction from red card to yellow card.

As such, the Panel concluded that the match official could not be shown to have been wrong to issue the red card and, as such, the red card will remain and will not be overturned.

When considering sanction for the red card, the Panel were provided with the Player’s upcoming match schedule. Included within that schedule was a match between Leinster and Cardiff in the United Rugby Championship on 1 March 2025. In circumstances where the Player might not ordinarily be expected to play in a match for his province during a Six Nations tournament, the Panel asked for a clear explanation (and evidence) to support the suggestion that this match was “meaningful” for the Player, within the meaning of the Rules, in that it was a match in which the Player could be expected to play (see rule 2.5.101). Whether a match is “meaningful” is a factual decision for the Panel.

Simon Easterby explained that with three world-class centres in the current Ireland squad (including the Player), the Player’s game time at centre had been limited in this season’s Six Nations. As such, the decision had been made to release the Player to Leinster to allow him to get game time before the Ireland v France match, in which he would have been expected to feature but for this red cards. In addition, Simon Easterby explained that part of the reason for releasing the Player to Leinster was to allow him the chance to play in a different position in order that Ireland can consider using the Player on the wing as well as in the centre. An e-mail sent by the IRFU to Leinster on 24 February 2025 confirmed that the Player was included in the list of Ireland squad players released to Leinster for the match against Cardiff.

Given all of the above, the Panel was satisfied that the Player had been expected to play at least some part in the match for Leinster against Cardiff and, as such, it is a “meaningful” match under the Rules and should count towards the Player’s sanction on this occasion.

DECISION

Foul play	Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Determined <input type="checkbox"/> Not determined <input type="checkbox"/> Other disposal (please state) <input type="checkbox"/>
Red card warranted	Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Determined <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not determined <input type="checkbox"/> Other disposal (please state) <input type="checkbox"/>

SANCTIONING PROCESS

References below are to provisions in the 2025 Disciplinary and Anti-Doping Rules, which form Schedule Four of the 2025 Six Nations Terms of Participation documentation.

ASSESSMENT OF SERIOUSNESS

Assessment of intent – clause 2.5.89 (a) and (b)
Intentional <input type="checkbox"/> Reckless <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
State reasons
The Player was intending to make a legal tackle and, accordingly, wrapped his arms. The head on head contact was not deliberate.
Nature of actions – clause 2.5.89 (c)
The Player made direct head on head contact with W12
Existence of provocation – clause 2.5.89 (d)
None
Whether Player retaliated – clause 2.5.89 (e)
N/A
Self-defence – clause 2.5.89 (f)
N/A
Effect on victim – clause 2.5.89 (g)
W12 was not injured in the collision and was able to continue to play on
Effect on match – clause 2.5.89 (h)
The Player was removed from the match and was substituted after 20 minutes (the red card being a 20 minute red card)
Vulnerability of victim – clause 2.5.89 (i)
W12 was not in a particularly vulnerable position
Level of participation/premeditation – clause 2.5.89 (j)
Not premeditated
Conduct completed/attempted – clause 2.5.89 (k)
Completed
Other features of Player’s conduct – clause 2.5.89 (l)
None

ASSESSMENT OF SERIOUSNESS CONTINUED

Entry point					
Top end*	Weeks/matches	Mid-range	Weeks/matches	Lower end	Weeks/matches
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

*If top end, the JO or Disciplinary Committee must identify, based on his/her/its assessment of the seriousness of the conduct, an entry point between the top end and the maximum sanction and provide the reasons for selecting this entry point, below (see clause 2.5.90).

Reasons for selecting entry point above top end

Given the direct contact with W12's head, the mandatory minimum mid-range entry point applies. In light of the lack of any injury or other aggravating feature, a top end entry point was not appropriate.

RELEVANT OFF-FIELD MITIGATING FACTORS

Acknowledgement of foul play (and timing) – clause 2.5.91(a)	Player's disciplinary record – clause 2.5.91 (b)
The Player admitted that the incident amounted to foul play at the earliest opportunity.	The Player has a clean disciplinary record with no previous incidents.
Youth and/or inexperience of Player – clause 2.5.91 (c)	Conduct prior to and at hearing – clause 2.5.91 (d)
The Player is 30 years old and has played 199 professional matches.	The Player's conduct was exemplary. He was open and helpful in his descriptions of the incident and honest with his assessments of the circumstances.
Remorse (and timing if remorse) – clause 2.5.91 (e)	Other off-field mitigation – clause 2.5.91 (f)
The Player apologised to W12 at the time of the incident and after the match.	

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Number of weeks/matches deducted: 3

Summary of reason for number of weeks/matches deducted:

Given the Player's admission of foul play, his apology to W12, his conduct at the hearing and his previous clean disciplinary record, the Panel considered that he ought to be afforded the maximum 50% mitigation.

RELEVANT OFF-FIELD AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Player's status as an offender of the Laws of the Game – clause 2.5.94 (a)
N/A
Need for deterrence – clause 2.5.94 (b)
N/A
Any other off-field aggravating factors – clause 2.5.94 (c)
None


Number of additional weeks/matches: 0

SANCTION

NOTE: PLAYERS ORDERED OFF OR CITED ARE PROVISIONALLY SUSPENDED PENDING THE HEARING OF THEIR CASE, SUCH SUSPENSION SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN SANCTIONING – CLAUSES 2.5.14 AND 2.5.33.

Total sanction	3 week suspension from playing (reduced to 2 weeks upon successful completion of the CIP)	Sending off sufficient <input type="checkbox"/>
Sanction commences	22 February 2025	
Sanction concludes	16 March 2025	
Matches/tournaments included in sanction	Leinster v Cardiff – 1.3.2025 Ireland v France – 8.3.2025 Italy v Ireland – 15.3.2025* *the sanction will not include this match should the Player complete the CIP	

Costs	Nil
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Signature (JO or Chairman)		Date	28 February 2025
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NOTE: THE PLAYER WILL HAVE UNTIL 4PM (GMT) ON THE THIRD DAY (EXCLUDING WEEKENDS) AFTER RECEIPT OF THE WRITTEN NOTICE OF THE DECISION OF THE CHAIRMAN/JO TO FILE AN APPEAL WITH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DISCIPLINARY PANEL C/O THE DISCIPLINARY OFFICER – CLAUSE 2.6.4. APPEAL TO BE EMAILED TO disciplinary@sixnationsrugby.com.