

DISCIPLINARY DECISION



Match	Ireland U20 v England U20		
Player's Union	RFU	Competition	U20s Six Nations
Date of Match	30/1/25	Match venue	Cork, Ireland
Applicable rules	2025 Six Nations Disciplinary and Anti-Doping Rules		

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE			
Player's Surname	Kpoku	Player's Forename(s)	Junior
Player's Date of birth	10/9/05	Referee's Name	Jeremy Rozier
Foul play	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not admitted	Red card warranted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not admitted
Offence	Dangerous tackle, contrary to Law 9.13	SELECT: Red card <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citing <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If "Other" selected, please specify:	
Summary of sanction	3 matches to be reduced to 2 if the HCP Coaching Intervention Programme is successfully completed.		

HEARING DETAILS			
Hearing date	3/2/25	Hearing venue	Zoom call
Chairman/JO	Richard Cole (Wales)		
Other members of Disciplinary Committee	Stefan Terblanche (former SA player) David Croft (former Aus player)		
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)	Sam Jones, Counsel	Disciplinary Officer and/or other attendees	Tom Price, 6N Annie Quantrill, 6N David Barnes, RFU Eliza Ullersperger, RFU
List of documents/materials provided to Player in advance of hearing	Referee's Report TMO report Statement of Ireland 12, Eoghan Smyth Statement of Dr Barry O'Flanagan, Ireland team doctor Statement of Mark Mapletoft, England u20s coach Player's Schedule		

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

The Referee's report said: "Hug tackle by 6 England Head contact, foul play as player was upright, high danger as direct contact with force on a player who passed the ball before, no mitigation".

The TMO report said: "Dangerous tackle by 6 England. Head Contact. Foul play as player was upright. High danger as direct contact with force on a player who passed the ball before. No mitigation".

Ireland 12 said to a manger after the match: "I received the ball, out the back of a forward pod and after giving a pass to a teammate, felt a hit on the side of my head. I fell to the ground and touched the point of contact and then got up and rejoined the attacking phase."

The footage showed:

- a. Ireland attacking and the ball being passed out to the backs from the base of a ruck.
- b. Ireland 12 receiving a pass and then himself passing it on to a team-mate.
- c. As he did so, England 6 seeks to tackle him but does so dangerously – England 6 was upright and did not lower himself into the tackle.
- d. A reverse angle showed England 6 attempting to wrap his right arm on Ireland 12.
- e. England 6's shoulder coming into contact with Ireland 12's head.
- f. Ireland 12 is knocked to the ground but soon gets up and re-joins play.

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

Dr O'Flanagan confirmed that Ireland 12 suffered no injuries following a thorough examination, that the independent doctor confirmed this, and that there was no evidence of lasting symptoms the following day.

SUMMARY OF PLAYER'S EVIDENCE

The Player admitted both foul play and a red card in the clear, helpful and realistic written submissions of his counsel.

There was an acceptance that he remained "too high" in the tackle, that there was an attempt to wrap albeit with one arm (reverse angle footage) but that the force and degree of danger involved meant that the only issue to be decided was one of sanction.

The player had apologised to Ireland 12 after the game and re-iterated that at the hearing.

In light of the admissions, the clear footage, and the approach taken in the submissions (where matters of fact were admitted and points on mitigation raised) there was no need to hear from the player in detail.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Ireland were attacking and the ball is passed out to the backs from the base of a ruck.
2. Ireland 12 receives the ball, and he passes it to a team-mate.
3. As he did so, England 6 seeks to tackle him, described as a “bear hug” by the referee who was 5m away, but does so dangerously.
4. England 6’s shoulder comes into contact with Ire 12’s head.
5. England 6 was upright and did not lower himself into the tackle.
6. England 6’s tackle showed poor technique and execution.
7. The dangerous tackle was reckless and not deliberate in our judgement.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Determined <input 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	
This was poor execution of the tackle by the player rather than a deliberate act to tackle him dangerously and connect with his head.	
Nature of actions – clause 2.5.89 (c)	
The player’s shoulder connected with Ireland 12’s head	
Existence of provocation – clause 2.5.89 (d)	
Not applicable	
Whether Player retaliated – clause 2.5.89 (e)	
Not applicable	
Self-defence – clause 2.5.89 (f)	
Not applicable	
Effect on victim – clause 2.5.89 (g)	
Dr O’Flanagan says that Ireland 12 reported no injuries immediately after the collision and has no lasting symptoms. The independent doctor was happy for him to play on.	

Effect on match – clause 2.5.89 (h)
None. England were reduced to 14 players for much of the match
Vulnerability of victim – clause 2.5.89 (i)
Ireland 12 confirms that he was running with the ball, passed it and then felt a strike to his head. He was obviously not expecting to be struck to the head and to that extent he was vulnerable.
Level of participation/premeditation – clause 2.5.89 (j)
Not applicable
Conduct completed/attempted – clause 2.5.89 (k)
It was complete
Other features of Player’s conduct – clause 2.5.89 (l)
Not applicable

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"/>	6	<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
There was contact with Ireland 12’s head in this instance and so the mid-range is the automatic starting point. We did not feel that this foul play warranted a top end starting point.

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 accepted the charge at the earliest opportunity	The player has an exemplary disciplinary record. This is his first red card.
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 young at 19 years old and is relatively inexperienced in professional rugby.	The player’s conduct was exemplary

Remorse (and timing if remorse) – clause 2.5.91 (e)	Other off-field mitigation – clause 2.5.91 (f)
We were told that the player contacted Ireland 12 and apologised for his actions and checked on his welfare. He repeated his apology at the hearing.	The player had the benefit of an excellent reference from his coach, Mr Mapletoft, which praised the high standards he maintains within the squad.

Number of weeks/matches deducted:

Summary of reason for number of weeks/matches deducted:

The starting point is 6 weeks/matches. Full mitigation is applied using the criteria above.

3 matches (to be reduced to 2 in the event of successful completion of HCP programme). We think given the player’s age and inexperience he is an ideal candidate for the programme.

RELEVANT OFF-FIELD AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Player’s status as an offender of the Laws of the Game – clause 2.5.94 (a)
Not applicable
Need for deterrence – clause 2.5.94 (b)
Head contact is obviously to be discouraged but we do not add weeks to the sanction in this instance.
Any other off-field aggravating factors – clause 2.5.94 (c)
Not applicable

Number of additional weeks/matches:

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 matches (to be reduced to 2 in the event of successful completion of HCP programme).	Sending off sufficient <input type="checkbox"/>
Sanction commences	3/2/25	
Sanction concludes	24/2/25 (17/2/25 if programme successfully completed)	
Matches/tournaments included in sanction	England v France (U20s 6N) 7/2/25 Racing 92 v Vannes (Top 14) 15/2/25 England v Scotland (U20s 6N) 21/2/25*	

Costs	None
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Signature (JO or Chairman)	Richard Cole	Date	3/2/25
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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.