

# RFU SHORT JUDGMENT FORM



Match (home)	London Irish	Vs (away)	Saracens RFC
Club's Level	1	Competition	Gallagher Premiership
Date of Match	23/12/2022	Match Venue	Brentford Community Stadium

Particulars of Offence			
Player's Surname	COLEMAN	Date of Birth	07/10/1991
Forename(s)	Adam	Plea	Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Admitted <input type="checkbox"/>
Club name	London Irish	RFU ID No.	2548483
Type of Offence	Red Card		
Law 9 Offence	9.13 - Dangerous Tackle		
Sanction	4 weeks.		

Hearing Details			
Hearing Date	30/12/2022	Hearing venue	Remote
Chairmen/SJO	Jeremy Summers	Panel Member 1	Olly Kohn
Panel Member 2	Dr Julian Morris	Panel Secretary	Rebecca Morgan-Scott
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, Team Manager Declan Kidney, DoR	Angus Hetherington, RFU David Barnes, RFU (observing)

List of documents/materials provided to player in advance of hearing:
Charge Sheet Red Card Report Match footage Medical report dated 27/12/2022 RFU Regulation 19 World Rugby HCP

The Referee's (Mathew Carley) report recorded:

"Following LI kick off to Saracens down the middle of field, S gained possession and set up a ruck which they played left from. S2 carried the ball forward and LI 5 attempted to tackle him knocking him forcefully to the floor, the ball is spilt loose LI gained possession. I soon after stopped the game as S2 was injured. TMO Rowan Kitt then referred the said tackle as foul play and we quickly established foul play by LI 5, as contact to head, upright tackler, high force and no mitigation and issued a red card to LI 5 Mr Adam Coleman."

The incident occurred in th 15th minute (1st half) at which the point the score was 7-3. The match was described as physical with issues of game values arising from both sides.

Match footage was viewed, which was consistent with the above report.

1. Player is in the defensive line just inside the Saracens 22. S1 is attacking with the ball an makes a short pop (tip) pass to S2 standing to his left.
2. This sees the Player shift his weight /focus from S1 to S2 and closes in on S2 immediately .
3. He is always in a near upright position, and his right shoulder makes direct contact with significant force to S2's face.
4. His right arm can be seen to be raised at about 45 degrees close to S2's waist, and there is an attempt to wrap, albeit that the first point of contact is made by the Player's right shoulder which leads up and into S2's head.
5. S2 is knocked backwards to the ground by the force of impact. The Player is seen immediately to check on the wellbeing of S2.
6. Play carries on for a short while, and there is some reaction from other Saracens players.
5. S2 receives prolonged attention from the large medical team reflecting the potential seriousness of the injury.
6. Following a foul play review, the Player is issued with a Red Card.
7. Before leaving the pitch the Player again goes to check on S2, and his demeanor appears to acknowledge that he should have been dismissed.

A report from the Head of Medical at Saracens indicated:

"Tom was involved in the game vs London Irish - 23rd December 2022 as the starting Hooker. Following the incident in the 15th minute - he was attended to on the pitch by the pitch side medical team.

We undertook in-line immobilisation on the pitch as the player was unconscious and unresponsive on arrival, we therefore made the decision that the player needed to be removed on a stretcher. The player came around roughly within a minute / minute and a half.

Following removal from the pitch, in the medical room, the player was deemed alert and orientated and we were able to clear his neck and remove him from the board. He was provided with ~20minutes of oxygen therapy and on follow up at the end of the game he reported a few mild symptoms remained, mainly a headache. Follow up over the weekend - the player has shown improvement and has only 1 symptom today. The player is deemed concussed.

He will follow the GRTP protocol which will be a minimum of 12 days and will be required to carry out both the COMP assessment and see an ICC prior to being cleared to return to contact and game time."

## Summary of Player's Evidence

A written statement was received from the Player in advance of the hearing which read:

"Please see below my on-field account of the incident v Saracens Friday 23 December.

\*Saracens are in the possession of the ball inside their 22m.

I am setup in the defensive line, I feel we are short of defenders on my side, and I am calling players around the ruck. I come off the line to shut down the space of S1 receiving the ball as the carrier, S1 makes a late pass onto S2, I adjust to make the tackle on S2, my knees bent, both arms up to wraparound the ball carrier. I make the tackle, but due to speed of the carrier, he is closer to me than I have anticipated, thus I have not lowered my height enough and I make contact with S2 head area.

I immediately check on the player and stay with him as I realise, I have made contact with his head, and I want to ensure he is OK. The play is thankfully stopped for the player to receive medical treatment. After the referee has shown me the red card, I go back to check on Tom Woolstencroft again and to apologise, as I deeply regret the outcome of the incident.

I had no intention of hurting or making contact with Tom Woolstencroft's head. I apologise for the tackle, which due to the dynamic carry, I fail to reduce my height appropriately. I am relieved that Tom Woolstencroft was able to be up and about after the match and I was able to make contact with him to apologise again.

I will be working on my tackle technique in training, and I will ensure I continue to improve in this area."

The Player formally confirmed that he was accepting the charge

In presenting the case, Mr Hetherington indicated that the RFU's position was that the offending had not been intentional and reflected an error in technique in a fairly dynamic situation. The Player had been at fault with his height but it was not the worst type of tackle.

The RFU's submission was that the seriousness of offending should be assessed at mid-range.

Oral evidence was also received from the Player.

He stated that he had gone up in the line intending to tackle S1, and saw very late that he was going to make a tip pass to S2. He had tried to tackle S2 using his arms, but the delayed pass and the speed of the attack has not allowed him to do so.

He had not intended to make contact with the head or to hurt S2.

He was very remorseful, and had stayed with S2 after the incident. He had also contacted him after the game.

In submissions on behalf of the Player from Mr James and Mr Kidney, it was argued that the Player had tried to make a lawful tackle, but had not dipped low enough due to the speed of the incident. Both his arms had however been raised in an attempt to wrap. He had not dropped low enough once he had shifted from S1 to S2 after the tip pass.

It was noted that the Player was not coming out of the line at speed, S2's speed had contributed to the force and dynamics of the collision and the Player had fully wrapped his arms around S2.

## Findings of Fact

1. The Player had been initially positioned to effect a double tackle on S1, and had been wrong footed by the ensuing tip pass from S1.
2. He was not approaching at speed, and transferred his weight to attempt to tackle S2.
3. His body position was nearly upright and was always too high.
4. Both arms could be seen to be raised in an attempted wrap, but initial contact was between the Player's right shoulder and S2's face before his arms then completed the wrap.
5. The contact was direct and with a high degree of danger.
6. There were no mitigating features present to reduce the seriousness of the foul play.
6. The force of the contact knocked S2 to the ground and rendered him temporarily unconscious.
7. S2 suffered a concussion, will need to follow the return to play protocol and the timing of his return is therefore at present unknown.

### Decision

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

On the Player's own admission the charge was upheld.

The Referee had correctly applied the HCP. There had been contact with the head that had resulted from foul play, albeit that this had been reckless rather than intentional.

Contact had been direct with a high degree of danger being present.

No mitigating factors were present.

## 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:

The offending was highly dangerous but was not intentional and had resulted from poor technique arising in a split second when the dynamics of the situation changed following a well executed tip pass from S1.

#### Nature of actions - Reg 19.11.8(c)

Player was too high into the tackle and led with his shoulder into the head of S2 with force.

Existence of provocation - Reg 19.11.8(d)

None relevant.

Whether player retaliated - Reg 19.11.8(e)

Not relevant.

Self-defence - Reg 19.11.8(f)

Not relevant.

Effect on victim - Reg 19.11.8(g)

S2 suffered quite serious injury as set out above, and his recovery period is at present uncertain.

Effect on match - Reg 19.11.8(h)

None.

Vulnerability of victim - Reg 19.11.8(i)

No inherent vulnerability in what was a normal tackle situation.

Level of participation/premeditation - Reg 19.11.8(j)

No premeditation.

Conduct completed/attempted - Reg 19.11.8(k)

Completed.

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

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 type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<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:

Notwithstanding the RFU's submission that the offending was mid-range, the Panel looked carefully at whether the offending should be assessed as top end.

It noted the serious injury, but reminded itself that outcome (in terms of injury) alone should not determine the seriousness of the offending.

The contact with S2's head had been with a high degree of force and danger, but in the view of the Panel had resulted from poor technique in not going lower into the tackle.

Of significance, the Player could clearly be seen to have attempted to wrap around S2 to effect a lawful tackle, but his height going into the contact resulted in his failing to execute the tackle legally.

Taking that fact, and all the circumstances of the incident into account, despite the serious injury, the Panel determined that, on balance, the correct assessment was mid-range.

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)
Immediate and unequivocal.	One previous similar offence in 2021.
Youth and/or inexperience of player - Reg 19.11.10(c)	Conduct prior to and at hearing - Reg 19.11.10(d)
Not relevant.	Respectful, contrite and befitting a player of his status.

Remorse and timing of Remorse - Reg 19.11.10(e)	Other off-field mitigation - Reg 19.11.10(f)
Immediate, repeated and unequivocal.	None

Number of weeks deducted: 2

**Summary of reason for number of weeks deducted:**

The Panel concluded that the mitigation available to the Player justified a 30% reduction from the entry point.

**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)**

Not relevant.

**Need for deterrent to combat a pattern of offending - Reg 19.11.13(b)**

None.

**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)**

None.

Number of additional weeks: 0

Games for meaningful sanctions:

Gloucester Rugby v London Irish Saturday 31 December  
London Irish v Bath Rugby Wednesday 04 January (PRC)\*  
London Irish v Bristol Bears Sunday 08 January  
London Irish v DHL Stormers Sunday 15 January.

The Player has missed 10 weeks of the season due to significant injury, and evidence was before the Panel indicating that it had been intended to select the Player for the PRC match on 4 January as part of a graduated return to full match fitness.

The Player is ineligible to participate in the World Rugby CIP, having done so previously.

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	4 weeks	Sending off sufficient	
Sanction commences	23/12/22		
Sanctions concludes	16/1/23		
Free to play	17/1/23		
Final date to lodge appeal	31/12/22		
Costs (please refer to Reg 19, Appendix 3 for full cost details)	£500		

Signature (JO or Chairman)	J Summers	Date	29/12/2022
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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