

DECISION FORM

To be sent to discipline@rugbyeurope.eu.



Particulars of offence

Player's Name: Spike Salman

Player's number: 6

Player's union: Netherlands

Competition: Rugby Europe Championship

Host Team (T1): Netherlands

Visiting Team (T2): Spain

Venue: National Rugby Center, Amsterdam

Date of match: 07/02/2026

Rules to apply: Regulation 17 World Rugby Handbook; Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations

Referee Name: Filippo RUSO

Plea: Admitted Not admitted

Offence: Red card Citing Other *If "Other" selected, please specify: 20-min Red Card*

Hearing details

Chairperson: Antony Davies (ENG)

Other Members of the Disciplinary Panel:

- Francesco Grillo (ITA)
- Andrei Zamfirescu (ROM)

Hearing date: February 10th, 2026

Hearing venue: On remote

Appearance Player: Yes No

Appearance Union: Yes No

Player's Representative(s): Jose Gorrotxategi (Technical Director RN), Bryan Easson (Coach RN)

Other attendees: David Baird-Smith (Rugby Europe), Arthur Magdalou (Rugby Europe)

List of documents/ materials considered by the Panel:

- Red-card report
- Game sheet
- Match footage of the incident
- World Rugby HCP
- Player's written statement and still photographs
- Statement of Pau Aira (Spain 22)
- Medical statement – Dr. Mario Muniz (Spain)

Summary of essential elements of citing / Referee's report / Incident footage

The Referee's report referred to an incident on 59 minutes 10 seconds which he described concisely as "Dangerous clean out of ruck". When we viewed the match footage we found that description more than adequate. There were 7 views, though many were from distance. The most helpful we found was the camera behind the Netherlands team.

What we saw was Spain in possession, with the ball carrier tackled close to the halfway line, 3 or so metres away from touch. A ruck forms. S14 is well set in the ruck, in a north/south alignment, protecting the ball

which is behind his feet. The ball is available for S9 to pick up and distribute. S22 is also bound onto the touchline side of the ruck in an east/west position with his head over the body of S14.

The player approaches the ruck, appears to look at it and then elects to charge in with force to attempt to disrupt it. In doing so, he goes above S14's body and drives with his arms by his sides, not out in front as if to bind into the ruck, but head first north to south over the body of S14, making direct contact head on head with S22 causing the head of S22 to ricochet back. S22 appears to put his hands to his head as the force of the collision knocks him to the ground and out of the ruck. The statement of S22 referred to the ruck being solid and won so he was relaxed because he was not expecting any challenge to it so did not brace or prepare himself. His statement confirmed that contact was with the leading head of NL6 direct to his jaw with considerable force.

Essential elements of other evidence (e.g. medical reports)

Pau Aira's statement, supplemented with Dr. Muniz' report, confirmed point of contact as face (nose and left cheekbone). The nature and extent of the injury was a facial contusion involving the nasal area and left cheekbone requiring symptomatic treatment consisting of analgesia and local ice application. The player was able to continue playing in the match and no further treatment was required. He would not miss any training or matches.

Summary of player's evidence

The player had submitted a detailed disciplinary statement which we found helpful. He was invited to supplement that and was then questioned by the members of the Panel. He said that prior to the game they had formulated a plan aimed at slowing down Spanish ruck ball. They had identified that Spain did not over-commit players to rucks so it was always worth a challenge. Contesting such rucks was a key part of their game plan. He contended that his clear out was legal. His focal point was clearing S14, who was the player protecting the ball. S22 was to the side, perpendicular to the action, and was only in his peripheral view when he entered the ruck to clear it. He said that S14 had his shoulders lower than his hips and his hands on the floor to support his upper body. As he entered the ruck, S14's body came up, which had the effect of making his body slide upwards into contact with S22's head.

The player's statement then addressed the World Rugby HCP. They did not find any foul play and considered the level of danger to be low/medium, with an absence of injury and mitigating factors in the upwards movement of the body of S14 which forced the player into contact with S22. He said that he was very sorry that contact had been made with the head of S22.

Findings of fact

1. The player had time to assess the body positions in the ruck before deciding to propel himself head first with his arms by his sides into it. His actions were intentional in relation to the contact, but reckless as to whether injury would be caused, either to S14 or S22.
2. The player was aware of the positioning of S22 when he drove into the ruck head first.
3. S22 was vulnerable in that the ruck was clearly won with the ball safe and secure at the rear. He was not expecting contact.
4. The player's left arm particularly is alongside his body with his left hand turned back. His actions were always illegal because of the position of his arms and that he led with his head. Neither S14 nor S22 changed position. In those circumstances, mitigating factors under the HCP cannot be engaged. We saw no evidence of S14 raising his body.

5. There was head contact. The player's actions were always illegal. There was foul play with the player being at fault and, because he propelled himself with force into the ruck there was, in our view, a high degree of danger. Mitigation does not apply for intentional or illegal acts of foul play. The player made no attempt to wrap and failed to exercise the required duty of care to other players, and particularly S22.

In all the circumstances, we did not have too much difficulty upholding the red card.

Decision

Proven Not proven Other disposal (please state)

SANCTIONING PROCESS

Assessment of seriousness

As per Article 4.5 of Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations and Regulations 17 of World Rugby

Assessment of intent:

Intentional/deliberate Reckless

State reasons:

Intentional as to action. Reckless as to whether injury would be caused.

Nature of actions

Please refer to Essential Elements and Findings

Existence of provocation:

None found

Whether player retaliated:

No.

Self-defence:

No.

Effect on victim:

Please see medical statement and victim player's statement

Effect on match:

None.

Vulnerability of victim:

Moderate/high given that the ruck was clearly won and he would not be expecting a challenge and certainly not a challenge which involved propulsion into a stationary ruck with a leading head

Level of participation / premeditation:

High in that the team tactic was to challenge rucks and the player had plenty of time to assess the ruck and position of the protagonists in it before deciding to join it.

Conduct completed / attempted:

Fully completed.

Other features of player's conduct:

N/A

Entry point

Low-end	Weeks	Mid-range	Weeks	Top end	Weeks
---------	-------	-----------	-------	---------	-------

<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	10+
Reasons for selecting entry point:					
The note to World Rugby Regulation 17 Appendix 1 states "Any act of foul play which results in contact with the head and/or neck shall result in at least a mid-range sanction." We found head contact. The victim player played on without lingering injury and in the circumstances we did not find the foul play warranted a top end entry point.					

Relevant off-field mitigating factors	
<i>As per Article 4.5 of Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations and Regulations 17 of World Rugby</i>	
Acknowledgement of guilt and timing:	Player's disciplinary record / good character:
We were somewhat surprised, having seen and read what we did, that the player should have maintained that he was carrying out a legal clear out with no foul play and a low/medium degree of danger. He then went on to allege mitigating factors under the HCP when the act was clearly always illegal and in any event had it not been we could not discern the movement in the body position of S14 which the player relied upon. He could therefore expect no reduction on account of an acknowledgment of guilt or its timing.	The player has a very good disciplinary record, having never previously been sent off or cited. He is an international player and of previous good character.
Youth and inexperience of player:	Conduct prior to and at hearing:
The player is 25 and has been a professional rugby player for 4 years. He is neither young, nor inexperienced.	The player fully engaged with the disciplinary process and acted appropriately at the hearing.
Remorse and timing of Remorse	Other off-field mitigation:
The player did say that he was very sorry to have made contact head on head and spoke to the opponent after the game to check that he was OK.	

Number of weeks deducted: 2
Summary of reason for number of weeks deducted:
In view of the player's lack of acknowledgment of the act of foul play we did not feel that he was entitled to the maximum mitigation of 50%.

Additional relevant off-field aggravating factors
<i>As per Article 4.5 of Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations and Regulations 17 of World Rugby</i>
Player's status as an offender of the Laws of the Game:
N/A
Need for deterrence:
N/A
Any other off-field aggravating factors:
N/A
Number of additional weeks: 0

Summary of reason for number of weeks added:**SANCTION**

NOTE: Players ordered off or cited by a citing commissioner are provisionally suspended pending the hearing of their case, such suspension should be taken into consideration when sanctioning – RE Discipline Regulations 4.1.4 / 4.4 (or equivalent Tournament rule)

Total sanction: 4 matches	<input type="checkbox"/> Sending off sufficient
Sanction commences: 10 th February 2026	
Sanction concludes: 9 th March 2026 (subject as below)	
Matches/ tournaments included in sanction: The Player is suspended for the following matches	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15th February 2026 – Netherlands v Georgia • 22nd February 2026 – Switzerland v Netherlands • 27th February 2026 – Stado (Club game) v Narbonne • 7th/8th March 2025 – REC Semi Finals 	
The Rugby Europe Tournament is engaged with World Rugby’s education process and the player is eligible subject to the conditions of the scheme to apply for education. In the event that he does and completes it successfully, then the fourth match scheduled for 7 th /8 th March 2026 will not be effective and the player will be free to play from 28 th February 2026.	
Costs: None sought or awarded.	

Signature
Name of the JO or Chairman: Antony Davies
Date: 12 th February 2026
Signature (JO or Chairman): <i>Antony Davies</i>

NOTE: You have 48 hours from notification of the decision of the chairman/jo to lodge an appeal with the tournament director – RE Discipline Regulations 4.6.2 (or equivalent Tournament rule)