

DECISION FORM

To be sent to discipline@rugbyeurope.eu.



Particulars of offence	
Player's Name: Julien Berger	
Player's number: 9	
Player's union: Belgium	
Competition: Rugby Europe Championship	
Host Team (T1): Belgium	Visiting Team (T2): Netherlands
Venue: Province Naimette Arena, Liège s	
Date of match: 07/03/2026	
Rules to apply: Regulation 17 World Rugby Handbook; Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations	
Referee Name: Diogo Inacio	
Plea: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not admitted	
Offence: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Red card <input type="checkbox"/> Citing <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>If "Other" selected, please specify:</i>	
Hearing details	
Chairperson: Martin Picton (Chairperson, ENG)	
Other Members of the Disciplinary Panel: - Francesco Grillo (Wing, ITA) - Bartosz Marczynski (Wing, POL)	
Hearing date: March 10 th , 2026	
Hearing venue: On remote	
Appearance Player: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Appearance Union: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Player's Representative(s): Charlie Fourneau and Laurent Dossat	
Other attendees: David Baird-Smith (Rugby Europe)	
List of documents/ materials considered by the Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red card report• Game sheet• Video clips of the incident (*4)	
Summary of essential elements of citing / Referee's report / Incident footage	
The red card report stated that the Player headbutted a member of the opposition when on the ground. That short description accurately reflected the video recording of the incident. The Player and the member of the opposing team were holding each other on the ground. The Player pulled the head of the opposition player towards his own and some contact between their respective faces occurred.	
Essential elements of other evidence (e.g. medical reports)	
There were no medical reports and no statement from the Netherland's player with whom the Player was grappling.	
Summary of player's evidence	
The Player informed the Panel that he perceived himself to have been targeted by members of the Dutch team and complained of having been subject to two previous late tackles. He said his action was after a third late tackle but he stated that he regretted his actions – that it was not something you should see on a rugby field. The Player did suggest that whilst he brought the heads together there was no significant impact. He	

said he respected the decision of the referee and accepted that he was correctly issued a red card but denied his actions were as intentional as the footage appeared to show. He emphasised there was provocation from the Dutch team generally and in respect of the incident that resulted in the two players wrestling on the ground.

The Player confirmed that he had previously been given a red card a couple of years ago which arose from him disrespecting an official.

Although the Player himself did not seek out and apologise to the player with whom the incident occurred, Laurent Dossat did speak to head coach of the Dutch team and express an apology after the match.

Findings of fact

As the Player accepted, he was guilty of a disciplinary offence contrary to 9.12 - physical abuse by striking with the head. The action carried out by the Player was principally by way of pulling the head of the Dutch player into his own. There appeared to be little forward movement of the Player's own head but his actions were such as to bring their heads together with a degree of force. The level of force involved appeared to be marginal. There was no evidence nor any suggestion that either player sustained any injury or ill effect as a result of that which the Player did. Given the low level of force none would be anticipated. It was however an intentional action on the part of the player that was wholly unnecessary even in the context of what might be termed a somewhat 'niggly' match.

Decision

Proven Not proven Other disposal (please state)

SANCTIONING PROCESS

Assessment of seriousness
<i>As per Article 4.5 of Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations and Regulations 17 of World Rugby</i>
Assessment of intent:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intentional/deliberate <input type="checkbox"/> Reckless
State reasons:
Although the Player did not push his head into the face of his opponent, his action with his arm in pulling his opponent's head towards his own was clearly intentional.
Nature of actions
See above
Existence of provocation:
The Player suggested there was a degree of provocation both in the context of events preceding the incident and also in the context of the incident itself. We had no reason to reject the Player's evidence as to a degree of provocation albeit there was nothing that could justify that which the Player did.
Whether player retaliated:
The Player was reacting to what he perceived to be a late tackle but he had no business doing so.
Self-defence:
N/A
Effect on victim:
None
Effect on match:
Only to the disadvantage of the Player's own team.
Vulnerability of victim:
There was a level of vulnerability in that the opposing player was lying on his back on the ground unable to prevent the Player executing the action that he chose to take.
Level of participation / premeditation:
The action did not appear to be premeditated.
Conduct completed / attempted:
Completed.
Other features of player's conduct:
N/A

Entry point					
Low-end	Weeks	Mid-range	Weeks	Top end	Weeks
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	16+
Reasons for selecting entry point:					
The panel had to reflect very carefully as to whether the Player's conduct merited a mid-range entry point. Were it not for the low level of force involved, and the fact that it did not result in any injury, the panel would have settled upon mid-range. The Player should count himself fortunate that the degree of force was such that the Panel were able to conclude that a low end entry point sufficiently met the merits of the case.					

Relevant off-field mitigating factors
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Acknowledgement of guilt and timing:	Player's disciplinary record / good character:
The Player indicated in advance of the hearing that he would not challenge the red card.	As mentioned above the Player has a previous red card finding against him and one that is relatively recent.
Youth and inexperience of player:	Conduct prior to and at hearing:
N/A	The Player and his representatives conducted themselves cooperatively and respectfully during the hearing.
Remorse and timing of Remorse	Other off-field mitigation:
The Player did not evidence very much by way of true remorse.	N/A

Number of weeks deducted: 2

Summary of reason for number of weeks deducted:

In the context of the Player's disciplinary record, and in the context of the somewhat grudging acceptance of responsibility coupled with an absence of any obvious remorse, the Panel concluded that it would not be appropriate to permit the player the full 50% mitigation.

Additional relevant off-field aggravating factors

Player's status as an offender of the Laws of the Game:

XX

Need for deterrence:

N/A

Any other off-field aggravating factors:

XXX

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: 10/03/2026	
Sanction concludes: 29/03/2026	
Matches/ tournaments included in sanction: The Player is suspended for the following matches 15/03/2026 Switzerland 21/03/2026 Sevens 2 Montevideo 22/03/2026 Sevens 2 Montevideo 28/03/2026 Sevens 2 Sao Paulo	
Costs:	

Signature
Name of the JO or Chairman: Martin Picton
Date: 11/03/2026
Signature (JO or Chairman): <i>M Picton</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)