

DECISION FORM

To be sent to discipline@rugbyeurope.eu.



Particulars of offence	
Player's Name: Ilan Vaassen	
Player's number: 23	
Player's union: Netherlands	
Competition: Rugby Europe Championship	
Host Team (T1): Switzerland	Visiting Team (T2): Netherlands
Venue: Stade Municipal, Yverdon-les-Bains	
Date of match: 22/02/2026	
Rules to apply: Regulation 17 World Rugby Handbook; Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations	
Referee Name: Diogo MIRANDA	
Plea: <input type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not admitted	
Offence: <input type="checkbox"/> Red card <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citing <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>If "Other" selected, please specify:</i>	
Hearing details	
Chairperson: Gareth Rees (ENG)	
Other Members of the Disciplinary Panel: - Florence Van Den Broucke (BEL) - Karlis Sarkans (LAT)	
Hearing date: February 26 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): Mitch McGahan (Coach and translator for the Player)	
Other attendees: Arthur Magdalou (Rugby Europe); David Baird-Smith (Rugby Europe)	
List of documents/ materials considered by the Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CC report• Game sheet• 5 video Clips of the incident• Statements from 4 Netherland team members including the Player 23• Statement from the Swiss 10• Statements from 2 Doctors in the Swiss and Netherland medical teams• Statements from 2 members of the Netherlands Coaching team	
Summary of essential elements of citing / Referee's report / Incident footage	
The Citing Commissioner's Report read as follows: <i>"The incident occurred in the second half, at 74:05 Match Time (circa 14:45 CET time of the day). It can be seen at min 1:55:34 of the footage provided, best angle available on file: SWITZERLAND VS NETHERLANDS - FONDO DCHO CERCA - 22 febrero 2026.mp4.</i> <i>CONTACT: SUI is attacking at the opponent's 22, SUI10 (PORCHER Jules) is the ballcarrier and kicks the ball to his right. The action will be concluded with the victory try by SUI. Immediately after kicking the ball, an impact occurred between NED 23 (VAASSEN ILAN) right shoulder and SUI10 head.</i>	

As a consequence of the shoulder charge, SUI10 goes to the ground. He then raises but a second after falls again to the ground.

The player will require medical assistance and the match will be suspended for 11 minutes for the MEDEVAC of the player.

He underwent HIA assessment which resulted positive for concussion.

Match ended at 15:06:03 CET.

After the match there weren't immediate TMs referrals.

The day after the match I contacted SUI TM, asking for more info regarding the player's health.

They confirmed the concussion and provided (via mail at 19:29CET of February 23rd, 2026):

1) medical doctor's statement, 2) victim player's statement.

In the afternoon (14:57) of February, 23rd 2026, I was contacted by Yann Benoit, from Suisse Rugby Union, who reported that they were "in the process to cite the player" and asked me how to send their claim. The SUI referral was sent to me via WhatsApp at 18:32CET of February 23rd, 2026.

ACTION: Shoulder charge, head contact

REASONING: The action of NED23 is an illegal shoulder charge to the head of the opponent.

The point of impact is between NED23 right shoulder and SUI10 head.

Footage shows no genuine attempt to wrap and after the impact a sudden movement backwards of the head of SUI10.

There is no secondary impact of the head of SUI10 to the ground.

According to WR Head Contact Process, there is

- 1. direct contact with the head,*
- 2. it's a foul play, defender is always upright.*
- 3. the degree of danger is high considering direct contact with the face of the opponent, recklessness and serious injury followed.*
- 4. there are no mitigating factors.*

DECISION: in my opinion the action of NED no. 23 is in breach of law 9.12, reaching the red card threshold."

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

Below is the relevant part of the Swiss team doctor's report:

"Clinical examination and management:

• On-field evaluation: No loss of consciousness. Player reported pain over the left temporal region and posterior aspect of the head. The player was placed in the supine position with immediate manual stabilization. Correct responses to Maddocks questions.

Preliminary neurological examination within normal limits. Transient tremors of the lower limbs lasting approximately 2 minutes, followed by rapid reduction in pain.

After the initial assessment, application of a cervical collar, the player was removed from the field on a stretcher by the ambulance team.

• Reassessment in the stadium medical room: Correct responses to Maddocks questions. Neurological examination of the cranial nerves and all four limbs within normal limits. Marked reduction in head pain. Superficial ecchymosis over the left supra-temporal region, tender on palpation. No lacerations.

After positioning the player seated on the examination table and in the absence of cervical pain or neurological signs, the cervical collar was removed. Cervical clinical examination showed no pain on active or passive rotation, flexion-extension, or lateral bending.

No tenderness on palpation of the spinous processes or the entire cervical region, including the upper cervical spine and occiput.

Repeat neurological examination approximately 20 minutes postinjury was within normal limits. No complaints upon standing or walking. No dizziness or pain.”

Summary of player’s evidence

Below is the statement from the Player, Ilan Vaasen, Netherlands 23.

“At the minute 75, I was positioned in the defensive line. When Switzerland switched play to the opposite side of the field, I anticipated this by moving back to properly reconnect with my defensive line.

From the back of our line, I received the team call “fire” to rush up in defence upon which I advanced towards the ball carrier while being a bit obstructed by another Swiss player. I initiated my tackle when the ball was still in his hands and he started to turn his run towards me.

While I was starting the tackle move, I observed that he initiated a kicking motion. At that moment, I immediately attempted to reduce my momentum and control my body in order to avoid a late tackle, which I did by turning my face and body away from the kick, which it happened quite instinctive. After the ball was kicked, I ceased my action as quickly as possible, which is not easy being 192cm tall, and followed the flight of the ball.

I do not have any recollection of the collision between me and the Swiss player number 10 to be particularly hard to me, neither of his head making contact with my shoulder. I am really sorry that the action, resulted in the player having to be extracted from the pitch and I hope that he will recover well and fast.”

At the Hearing he confirmed this version of the facts.

Findings of fact

After viewing various video clips, reading the evidence provided and hearing submissions from the Player and his representative, the panel concluded as follows about the facts of the incident:

The Netherlands 23 prepared to make a tackle with his arms in a position to make a wrap but changed his position when the Swiss 10 changed his own body position to kick to the touchline. As Netherlands 23 changed his position at speed, his right shoulder made some contact with the head of the Swiss 10.

Given the head contact, the World Rugby’s Head Contact Process (HCP) applies.

The Panel was of the opinion that there was no foul play under WR Law 9.12 in the circumstances of this collision.

According to WR Law 9.12:

“A player must not physically or verbally abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to, biting, punching, contact with the eye or eye area, striking with any part of the arm, shoulder, head or knee(s), stamping, trampling, tripping or kicking.”

Persuant to article 17.18.1 of WR Regulation 17 the “Disciplinary Committees shall undertake an assessment of the seriousness of the Player’s conduct that constitutes the offending.” This “assessment [...] shall be determined by reference to the following features: (a) whether the offending was intentional; (b) whether the offending was reckless, that is the Player knew (or should have known) there was a risk of committing an act(s) of Foul Play; and (c) the nature of the actions, the manner in which the offence was committed including part of body used (for example, fist, elbow, knee or boot).”

As the Appeal Committee in *Facundo Gattas v. World Rugby (2019)* (<https://pulse-static-files.s3.amazonaws.com/worldrugby/document/2019/10/05/018a67b7-21f9-48e7-9a39-2f48b1b206d5/191005-RWC19-Appeal-Committee-decision-Facundo-Gattas-Uru-.pdf>) explained: “28. [...] Not every contact with an opponent’s head in a game of Rugby Union is foul play. Contact with an opponent’s head may (obviously) occur accidentally. Accidental head contact is not foul play.”

Head contact will be accidental where it is unavoidable – i.e., where there is nothing that player could have done to avoid head contact (i.e., where it was outside of their control, such that they cannot reasonably be said to have been at fault). The question to be asked in determining whether head contact is accidental or reckless is whether the player should have known that, by their actions, there was a risk of making head contact (i.e., whether head contact was a reasonably foreseeable possibility, in the circumstances of the case). If the answer is no, the head contact is accidental.

The Panel was of the opinion that the Netherlands 23 had no intention to physically abuse the Swiss 10 and that the incident needs to be considered as an unfortunate rugby incident - an accident.

The Panel also took account of the referee saying: “nothing” while observing the incident from a few metres away. In addition, the TMO did not intervene, despite having approximately 10 minutes to review the video footage during a stoppage in play following the injury to the Swiss 10.

The medical evidence confirmed that the Swiss 10 had suffered a concussion. However, the Panel also had evidence that he had been injured and had received attention on at least two earlier occasions during the match, which may have contributed to his condition at the time this collision occurred.

Finally, it is important to note that the video clips we were shown were not close up and were available from only one angle. The Panel took account of this limitation when assessing the importance of the close proximity of the referee to the collision.

Given the above, the Panel is of the opinion that the incident did not constitute foul play, did not meet the red card threshold, and therefore warrants no sanction. The citing is not upheld.

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:

Nature of actions

Existence of provocation:

Whether player retaliated:

Self-defence:

Effect on victim:

Effect on match:

Vulnerability of victim:

Level of participation / premeditation:

Conduct completed / attempted:

Other features of player's conduct:

Entry point

Low-end <input type="checkbox"/>	Weeks 2	Mid-range <input type="checkbox"/>	Weeks 6	Top end <input type="checkbox"/>	Weeks 10+
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Reasons for selecting entry point:

Relevant off-field mitigating factors

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

Acknowledgement of guilt and timing: XXX	Player's disciplinary record / good character: XXX
Youth and inexperience of player: XXX	Conduct prior to and at hearing: XXX
Remorse and timing of Remorse	Other off-field mitigation:

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Number of weeks deducted: X
Summary of reason for number of weeks deducted:

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:
Need for deterrence:
Any other off-field aggravating factors:

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:	<input type="checkbox"/> Sending off sufficient
Sanction commences:	
Sanction concludes:	
Matches/ tournaments included in sanction:	
Costs:	

Signature
Name of the JO or Chairman: Gareth Rees
Date: 26 February 2026
Signature (JO or Chairman): <i>Gareth Rees</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)