

IN THE MATTER CONCERNING

ERHARD SOVANY (HUNGARY)

VLADIMIR DUKIC (SERBIA)

Erhard Sovany - offence contrary to 9.12 (must not physically abuse someone);

Vladimir Dukic - offence contrary to 9.20 (dangerous play in a ruck or maul).

DECISION

Circumstances

1. On 4th October 2025, there was a match in the Rugby Europe Men's Conference between Hungary and Serbia.
2. In that match, Erhard Sovany was playing for Hungary (shirt number 15) and Vladimir Dukic was playing for Serbia (shirt number 3).
3. In the 33rd minute of the game, with Hungary in possession of the ball, a tackle was made.
4. Sovany (Hungary 15) got his body over the ball to begin the forming of a ruck. Dukic (Serbia 3) approached the contest from the side and charged with his shoulder into Sovany. His shoulder charge was in direct contact with the head area of the opponent.
5. Sovany responded by striking out at Dukic. He drove his elbow down towards the back of the neck of Dukic and then swung a punch which was clearly aimed at the head of Dukic but missed.
6. The referee issued a red card to each player.

Hearing

7. An independent panel heard the disciplinary case which arose from those red cards. It was pragmatic and more efficient to hold a joint hearing – there was no prejudice to either player in that being done.

8. The Panel consisted of Thomas Gilbert (Chair; Eng); Francesco Grillo (Ita); Ondřej Sarga (Cze).
9. Mr Sovany was charged with an offence contrary to 9.12 (must not physically abuse someone); Mr Dukic was – after an amendment – charged with an offence contrary to 9.20 (dangerous play in a ruck or maul).
10. Each player admitted the charge that they faced.
11. In determining the case brought against each player, the Panel was able to consider: the video of the incident; the reports made by the referee; the written submissions made on behalf of each player; the oral testimony given by each player and their previous (clean) disciplinary records.
12. Mr Sovany apologised and explained that he had reacted to the charge by Mr Dukic in part because he had previously suffered an injury from a similar piece of play.
13. Mr Dukic apologised and explained that he part of the reason for his foul play was fatigue. It was also said on his behalf that this issue would be addressed in training – it needs to be: in the footage Mr Dukic appears to have performed a similarly poor attempt at physical contact in the seconds before this incident.

Discussion

14. Both players displayed conduct which fell below what should be expected of players playing at this level. There is no justification for approaching a post-tackle contest in such an obviously dangerous and inexperienced way (Mr Dukic) or taking the law into one's own hands (Mr Sovany).
15. The game of Rugby Union has made considerable efforts to address the issue of head contact (for well understood reasons) and it is entirely unacceptable for players to be engaging in foul play which makes contact with the head.

Regulations

16. World Rugby Regulation 17 governs 'Discipline and Foul Play'. Appendix One to Regulation 17 provides that: "Any act of foul play where the person committing the act of foul play makes contact with an opponent's head and/or neck, and that contact with the head and/or neck warrants a red card, shall result in at least a mid-range sanction".

17. Each player had committed an act of foul play involving contact with the head and/or neck of an opponent. As a result, the correct starting point was a mid-range sanction.

18. The mid-range sanction for both punching (9.12) and charging into a ruck (9.20) is 6 weeks.

Vladimir Dukic

19. The correct assessment of his case was as follows:

- a. Head contact; no discernible effect on victim or match; no premeditation; no other relevant feature of conduct.
- b. Entry point: 6 weeks
- c. Mitigating features:
 - i. Acknowledgement of guilt
 - ii. Previous good character
 - iii. Expression of remorse
 - iv. Good conduct in hearing
- d. Total deducted to reflect mitigation: 3 weeks
- e. No off-field aggravating features requiring an adjustment. There is no need to aggravate sanction to reflect need for deterrence because the need for deterrence is already reflected in the mid-range entry point.
- f. Total sanction: Suspended for next 3 games (11th October 2025; 18th October 2025 and 25th October 2025)
- g. No costs

Erhard Sovany

20. The correct assessment of his case was as follows:

- a. Head contact; no discernible effect on victim or match; no premeditation; no other relevant feature of conduct.
- b. Entry point: 6 weeks
- c. Mitigating features:
 - i. Acknowledgement of guilt
 - ii. Previous good character
 - iii. Expression of remorse
 - iv. Good conduct in hearing

- d. Total deducted to reflect mitigation: 3 weeks
- e. No off-field aggravating features requiring an adjustment. There is no need to aggravate sanction to reflect need for deterrence because the need for deterrence is already reflected in the mid-range entry point.
- f. Total sanction: Suspended for next 3 games (11th October 2025; 19th October 2025 and 2nd November 2025)
- g. No costs

Thomas Gilbert

Francesco Grillo

Ondřej Sarga

8th October 2025