RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

DISCIPLINARY HEARING

At: Holiday Inn, Bloomsbury

On: Tuesday 19 December 2007

JUDGMENT.

Player: Robert Hoadley Club: London Wasps RFC

Match: London Wasps A v London Irish A

Venue: Wasps **Date of match:** 11th December 2007

Panel: Jeff Blackett (Chairman), Jeremy Summers and Peter Budge

Secretary: Liam McTiernan

Attending: The Player.

John Partridge, Solicitor

Charge and Plea

The Player pleaded guilty to striking an opponent contrary to Law 10(4)(a).

The Facts

The Player was ordered off (Red Card) in the 40th minute of the first half of the 'A' match between London Wasps and London Irish. The referees report read: "...a tackle was made on a Wasps player by a London Irish player roughly 30 metres from the London Irish line. A ruck formed over the top of the tackle. As the ball was moved away from the tackle/ruck area, I saw the Wasps number 12 standing over a London Irish player who was on the ground. I then saw the Wasps number 12 strike the London Irish player in the face with his fist. I saw the fist make contact with the face of the London Irish player. I blew my whistle and issued the player a red card. The London Irish player did not require medical treatment."

The video of the incident does not add anything to the Referee's report which was not, in any event, disputed by the Player. The view of the incident was obstructed by the number of players in the vicinity but it was clear from the relative positions of each player and the reaction of the referee that something had occurred.

The Player said that he had been provoked be the London Irish Number 6 and that he had reacted instantaneously and without and pre meditation. Mr Partridge asked the panel to review the events leading up to the incident on the video. In a play shortly before the incident the Player was next to a ruck and the Irish Number 6 approached him from the side and swung his arm in an attempt to strike the Player round the head.

The Player ducked and contact was only glancing. In another incident the video showed an altercation between the Player and the London Irish Number 6 which involved some pushing, heads being placed close to each other and some verbal exchanges. Finally, immediately before the incident, as the Player moved back to the tackle area the London Irish Number 6 pushed or struck him in his back. Immediately after the Player was ordered off the London Irish Number 6 advanced towards him and appeared shouted something at him.

Mitigation

Mr Partridge said the Player is not a persistent offender and is not normally violent. However, this match was particularly ill tempered with a lot of niggle. The referee has temporarily suspended a player from each side earlier in the game and had warned both captains that any further incidents would lead to more severe action. Had that not happened, Mr Partridge surmised, this offence would probably have merited nothing more than a temporary suspension. As it was, the Player was severely provoked and reacted instinctively. He was genuinely sorry for his lack of self control.

Mr Partridge said that Wasps had convened a disciplinary hearing the day after the incident and had suspended the Player with immediate effect pending the outcome of the RFU hearing. As a result he had missed the Heineken Cup match against Clermont Auvergne on the following weekend.

Sanction

The panel undertook an assessment of the seriousness of the player's conduct. It decided that the offending was deliberate as the Player had admitted that he intended to strike the opposition player. It also assessed that the use of a fist in this way is serious because of the potential for injury. However the panel accepted that there was significant provocation and that the punch was not very hard because there was absolutely no effect on the victim. There was no reaction from other players and no effect on the Game, apart from Wasps having to play on with only fourteen men. Although deliberate offending often pushes the assessment of seriousness towards the mid range or top end, in this case the other factors described persuaded the panel to assess this to be the least serious type of offending and categorised it as being at the LOWER END of seriousness.

The LOWER END entry point for striking is 2 weeks suspension. The panel considered whether there were any aggravating factors. Although the Player was cited and suspended for 3 weeks for stamping in May 2006 he could not be described as a persistent offender within the meaning of the Regulations. The panel concluded that there were no aggravating features. The panel then considered mitigating factors. First he acknowledged culpability at an early stage and did not seek to exploit the poor video evidence. However, he cannot claim to have a good record because he was suspended for stamping in 2006. His conduct prior to and at the hearing was exemplary and his remorse was genuine. In all the circumstances the panel concluded that there was insufficient mitigation to reduce the sanction from the entry point. He

is, therefore, suspended for two weeks from 12 December to 25 December 2007. He may play again on 26 December 2007.

The panel commended London Wasps for its swift action in suspending the Player as soon as the matter was brought to their attention.

Costs

Costs of £250.00 are awarded against the Player/club.

Right of Appeal

The Player is reminded of his right of appeal against this decision.

Signed: Jeff Blackett Date: 19 December 2007

Chairman