

**RFU – AVIVA PREMIERSHIP**

**DISCIPLINARY HEARING**

**At:** Office of the Judge Advocate General, Royal Courts of Justice

**On:** Monday 8 November 2010

**JUDGMENT.**

**Player:** George Stowers      **Club:** London Irish

**Match:** London Irish v Sale

**Venue:** Madjeski Stadium      **Date of match:** 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010

**Judicial Officer:** Jeff Blackett, Philip Evans, Jeremy Summers

**Secretariat:** Bruce Reece-Russel  
Liam McTiernan

**Attending:** Peter Larter – Citing Officer  
The Player.  
Neil Hatley – London Irish  
Kieran McCarthy – London Irish

**The Citing**

1. The Player was cited for a dangerous tackle. He pleaded not guilty
2. The Citing report stated:

“The sequence began at 36 minutes 10 seconds on the Elitehub recording with a restart by Sale Sharks following a try by LI. The drop kick restart to Sale’s left was knocked on by a LI player, the ball was collected by one of Sale’s front row forwards who passed inside to the Sale No 8 who ran infield and was tackled just over the halfway line. As he went to ground he popped the ball up to the left to the Sale No 7 (David Seymour) who ran straight forward for about 5 metres when he was tackled from his front by the LI No 8 (George Stowers).

From the Elitehub recording Stowers did appear to extend his left arm to make the tackle and, according to the referee, he also used his right arm in making the tackle. Stowers’ initial contact with his right shoulder was probably to Seymour’s chest and his head contacted Seymour’s right shoulder. However, the recording shows that Seymour’s head jerked backwards sharply and it is probably that Stowers’ right shoulder made contact with Seymour’s upper chest/lower head area. Stowers did not manage to take a firm hold on Seymour who immediately fell to the ground and landed heavily on his right shoulder; the

ball was released forwards before Seymour hit the ground. Stowers then fell on top of Seymour, and appeared to put considerable weight onto Seymour's left side and forced Seymour's left arm up to the side of Seymour's head. As Stowers rolled away from the tackle, Seymour was in obvious discomfort, and the Sale no 6 immediately called for medical help. After treatment, which lasted about 1 minute, Seymour walked over to the ensuing scrum exercising his right arm and shoulder and continued to play up to halftime, about 9 minutes; he did not play at all in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

The medical prognosis is that Seymour has suffered extensive damage to his right shoulder, is due to have a surgical repair carried out on 11<sup>th</sup> November and will be out of action for 4 – 6 months.

I have spoken to Martin Fox (referee) who was about 2 metres from the above tackle. He stated that he had a good view of the tackle made by George Stowers on David Seymour and he thought it was legal, in that Stowers attempted to wrap his right arm around Seymour's left side. The referee also advised me that his assistant on the far side of the pitch reported that he also had a good view of the tackle and he also thought it was legal. The officials took no action with regard to this tackle.

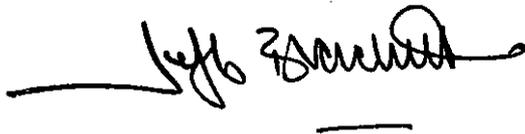
On the balance of probabilities, I consider that this was an illegal tackle by the LI No 8 Georg Stowers in that he made contact with his right shoulder to David Seymour's upper chest/lower head area, and I therefore cite him under Law 10.4(e) of the Laws of the Game for committing a dangerous tackle."

3. Sale physiotherapist, Doug Jones, stated in an email message that Seymour was carrying a pre existing injury to his left shoulder but now has an injury to his right shoulder which, he believed, occurred during this cited tackle. He stated: "After Stowers tackle he was left unconscious and then fell heavily on his right shoulder injuring it further, he managed to continue but was then removed from play at half time."
4. The footage of the incident was unclear. It showed Seymour pick up the ball and drive forward, dropping his head and shoulders forward so that he was running in a crouched posture. The Player drove in to tackle him. Even slowing the footage to frame by frame it is difficult to see where the contact was made, but it appears that initial contact was between the Player's shoulder and Seymour's chest, with his right arm wrapped around the left side of Seymour's body (his hand can be seen coming behind Seymour's waist) and with his head making contact with the top of Seymour's right shoulder. Seymour's head jerked backwards as he fell back to the ground and Stowers landed on top of him at the end of the tackle.
5. The referee, Martin Fox, gave evidence via a telephone link. He said that he had a clear view of the tackle which, in his view was entirely legal. He said that the point of contact was the chest and the Player's arms wrapped around Seymour's body. He said there was no contact above the line of the shoulders – had there been so he would have penalised Stowers. He also observed that Seymour was never unconscious and, after treatment, he got up and continued to play until half time. He said that during that period Seymour did not appear to be inhibited by any injury.

### Finding

6. The Panel decided that there was no evidence to gainsay that of the referee who had an uninterrupted and close view of this tackle which he described in detail and assessed a legal. As the player continued to play after about 1 minute the Panel does not accept that he was rendered unconscious by the tackle or that the injury for which he now requires surgery was necessary caused in this tackle. If it was it was accidental. **In those circumstances the Panel dismisses the citing. The Player is free to play with immediate effect.**

7. Notwithstanding this finding, I warned the Player about the risks associated with tackling an opponent in the chest. If the initial point of contact is high, but legally below the line of the shoulders, there is a risk that contact will move up to above the line of the shoulders, at which point the tackle becomes dangerous. If that had been the case here the citing would have been upheld and a sanction applied.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Blackett", with a horizontal line underneath it.

Signed: **Jeff Blackett**

Date: **12 November 2010**