

**PREMIERSHIP RUGBY SEVENS 2010
JUDICIAL OFFICER'S HEARING REPORT**

Date of Hearing: 30 July 2010

Name of Teams participating in the Match: Exeter Chiefs v Northampton Saints

Date of Match: 30 July 2010

Match Venue: Franklin's Gardens

Player's Name: Drew LOCKE

Team: Exeter Chiefs

Referee's Name: Greg Macdonald

Offence as stated in the Sending Off Report:

Law 10 4 (j). Lifting a player from the ground and either dropping or driving that player's head and/or upper body first into the ground whilst the player's feet are off the ground.

Note: Tournament subject to iRB Regulation 17 and not RFU Disciplinary Regulations.

Judicial Officer's Decision:

1. **Offence admitted**
2. **Player suspended for 3 weeks. In light of the fact the Player would have played for Exeter in the final of the tournament to be played on 6 August 2010, and having regard to iRB 17.35.10, two weeks of the suspension are converted to matches. Accordingly the Player is suspended for the period 30 July 2010 to 13 August 2010. He may play again on 14 August 2010.**

In Attendance:

Player
Player's Representative, Ricky Pellow
Referee
Tony Spreadbury, Referee Manager
Corrin Palmer, PRL
Liam McTiernan, RFU

Evidence Considered:

Sending Off Report
Match Recording
Oral evidence from Referee and Player
Submissions from Mr Pellow

Evidence:

Sending Off Report read as follows:

"I saw No. 10 of Exeter Chiefs lift a Northampton Player above the horizontal and drive him towards the ground.

As this was a dangerous tackle I issued the Exeter player with a red card"

The incident happened in first minute of game.

In evidence Referee said the incident occurred very quickly, and in the time available to him he could not be certain that the player had driven opponent into ground.

Match recording viewed. Showed a Saints player attacking in open play. Steps inside first Exeter tackle and Player has by then come across to cover.

Because of his action in evading first tackle, the Saints player was already slightly off the ground at the point contact is made by Player. Initial contact lawful tackle around waist with arms wrapped around. Player then carries on taking opponent upwards and through horizontal. Upper arm comes off opponent before he hits the ground, although he appeared then to make some further brief contact with the back of the Saints player before the action completed and Saints player landed. However action could not be categorised as a drive into the ground.

Saints player able to extend arm to break fall before hitting ground with shoulder. Retained possession of ball throughout and immediately got up and attempted to take quick tap penalty.

No injury. No treatment required. As above Saints player resumed play immediately.

Player gave evidence. Full apology for his actions which he accepted were dangerous. It was an important game, to determine the group winner. Large home crowd in favour of Saints and emotions running high.

He had been coming across to tackle and commented that the player felt very light at the point he tackled him. Consistent with fact that player was off the ground by that point having evaded first tackle.

23. 1 YC - technical offence. First year at Exeter. Very well regarded and noted for good approach to discipline. Capped for England Students.

Split second action. Out of character.

Assessment of Seriousness:

17.35.6 (a) - Offending not intentional. .

17.35. 6 (b) - Player reckless

17.35. 6 (c) - Lawful initial tackle leading to illegal dangerous tackle. Fact opponent already airborne at point of contact though relevant. Fall broken by arm, but shoulder then hit ground.

17.35. 6 (d) - None.

17.35. 6 (e) - None.

17.35. 6 (f) – A tackled player taken through horizontal will always be inherently vulnerable.

17.35.6 (g) - No premeditation

17.35. 6 (h) - Completed

17.35. 6 (i) - None

MID RANGE Assessment - 6 week entry point.

Note: Regard had to RFU decision in *Abbott* (2006) and subsequent decisions. Risk of catastrophic injury in offending of this nature is such that, even if reckless as here, an entry point of at least mid range is warranted.

Aggravating Features:

No aggravating features present (17.35.7)

Mitigation

Immediate guilty Plea
Clear record
Clear remorse
Exemplary conduct at hearing

50% (maximum) credit - 3 week reduction from entry point.

Sanction

3 week suspension. Applied as above.

Player advised of right of appeal as per Tournament Regulations

Signature of Judicial Officer:

Jeremy Summers

31.7.10