

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Sports Tribunal suspends power lifter for cannabis violation**

The Sports Tribunal has suspended power lifter, Nick Rhind, from participating in sport for two years because of an anti-doping violation involving cannabis.

Mr Rhind tested positive to cannabis at the New Zealand Powerlifting South Island Championships. He requested his B sample be tested and that was also positive for cannabis.

Upon receiving an application for provisional suspension from Powerlifting New Zealand, the Tribunal provisionally suspended Mr Rhind. Drug Free Sport New Zealand subsequently referred the alleged anti-doping violation to the Tribunal to decide.

Under the Sports Anti-Doping Rules 2011, the penalty for an anti-doping violation involving a prohibited substance is 2 years' suspension. However, in the case of "specified substances", such as cannabis, the athlete can receive a lesser penalty but only if he or she establishes certain requirements in the Rules. These requirements include the athlete: establishing how the cannabis got in their system; establishing that it was not taken with the intention of enhancing their sports performance; and producing corroborating evidence in addition to his or her own word (i.e. the athlete has to provide a witness to back up his or her evidence).

Mr Rhind filed a notice admitting the violation, advising he did not want to participate in the hearing and acknowledging that the Tribunal may impose a penalty without holding a hearing.

Because of the consequences to Mr Rhind of not participating and not establishing the requirements under the "specified substances" provisions of the Rules, the Tribunal sent a notice to him advising that if he took no action the Tribunal was required to suspend him for two years. He was given an opportunity to review his notice.

Mr Rhind never responded. The Tribunal sent follow up notices, letters and e-mails on several occasions reminding him of the consequences of not participating and informing him of the details of his hearing. The hearing was held by teleconference. Mr Rhind did not participate and made no further contact to explain why.

The Tribunal was satisfied that Mr Rhind had been made fully aware of the requirements under the Rules. As he had not sought to rely on the "specified substances" provisions of the Rules, he was not eligible for a reduced penalty, and the Tribunal had no option but to impose the mandatory penalty of two years' suspension.