

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Sports Tribunal Suspends wrestler for 3 months**

The Sports Tribunal has suspended wrestler, Ricky Welsford, from participating in sport for three months. Mr Welsford underwent an in-competition drug test at the New Zealand Wrestling Championships and tested positive for metabolites of the substance JWH-018 [JWH-018 N-(5-Hydroxypentanyl) and JWH-018 N-Pentanoic Acid]. This is a prohibited substance under the World Anti-Doping Code Prohibited List 2011. Its presence is commonly associated with synthetic cannabis use.

Mr Welsford admitted the violation. He and a witness gave evidence that they were celebrating a birthday with a group of friends. After a few drinks, a friend handed around "roll your own cigarettes" which had the synthetic cannabis product Kronic in them, which the friend said he had bought from a dairy before the sale of Kronic was banned. Everyone in the group was smoking the cigarettes and pressuring Mr Welsford to do so too but he was not keen. However, he ultimately succumbed to peer pressure from the rest of the group ("to shut us up so we could leave him alone" according to his witness) and took some puffs from one of the cigarettes. He did not realise that Kronic contained a product banned in sport.

The Tribunal assessed his degree of fault in all the circumstances of the case including

- Mr Welsford's age (19 at the time of the test)
- the circumstances of his peer group of friends pressuring him
- possibly some failure to immediately recognise that Kronic is likely to have the same consequence as cannabis
- his immediate acceptance of responsibility and his openness and honesty
- the fact that this violation is out of character with what his sporting results show must be a disciplined and determined character
- his contribution to his club as coach, and
- the loss of his Olympic qualifying chances (he was not nominated for the Oceania Championships due to being provisionally suspended for the positive test).

The Tribunal considered these factors justified a reduction from the usual starting point of four months' suspension for a cannabis violation.

However, on the other hand, the Tribunal emphasised the care and responsibility which an athlete has in relation to substances consumed. The Tribunal hoped that Mr Welsford will, given his personal unfortunate experience, drive home that message to those he coaches and is involved with in his club and sport.

The Tribunal decided that three months' suspension commencing from the date of provisional suspension was appropriate in all the circumstances.

The decision in this case will be made available for download from the website of the Sports Tribunal ([www.sportstribunal.org.nz](http://www.sportstribunal.org.nz)). See *Drug Free Sport New Zealand v Ricky Welsford* (ST 10/11). Copies can also be obtained directly from Brent Ellis, Registrar, Sports Tribunal of New Zealand (telephone: 0800 55 66 80; e-mail: [info@sportstribunal.org.nz](mailto:info@sportstribunal.org.nz)).