

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sports Tribunal suspends softball player for cannabis violation

The Sports Tribunal has suspended softball player, Thomas Cameron, from participating in sport because of an anti-doping violation relating to cannabis.

Mr Cameron tested positive to cannabis after competing in the Men's National Softball League Finals on 28 February 2009. Upon receiving notification from Drug Free Sport New Zealand that Mr Cameron had returned a positive test to cannabis, Softball New Zealand applied to the Sports Tribunal for a provisional suspension on 26 March. The Tribunal heard the application on 30 March and provisionally suspended Mr Cameron from 30 March 2009.

Drug Free Sport New Zealand subsequently referred the alleged anti-doping violation to the Tribunal to decide. The Tribunal has heard the matter and issued its decision.

Mr Cameron admitted the violation. The Tribunal accepted evidence that the cannabis was taken for recreational purposes at a party and was not used for sports performance enhancing purposes.

In assessing the appropriate penalty, the Tribunal did not consider that there were any mitigating factors. Mr Cameron acknowledged he had received the necessary anti-doping education and knew that he was taking a prohibited substance.

The Tribunal decided a suspension of two months was appropriate in the circumstances. The Tribunal took the provisional suspension into account in reaching its decision and imposed a penalty where the overall effect is of a two month suspension. Mr Cameron is suspended from two months from 30 March 2009.

The Tribunal considered whether it needed to extend the suspension period as the New Zealand softball season was now over. However, Mr Cameron had been intending to immediately play softball overseas in countries where the season was starting or had started. The two months' suspension will prevent him from playing overseas before 30 May 2009. It will therefore be an effective penalty.

The decision in this case will be made available for download from the website of the Sports Tribunal (www.sporttribunal.org.nz). See *Drug Free Sport New Zealand v Thomas Cameron* (ST 03/09). Copies can also be obtained directly from Brent Ellis, Registrar, Sports Tribunal of New Zealand (telephone: 0800 55 66 80; e-mail: info@sporttribunal.org.nz).