

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**27 May 2009**

**Sports Tribunal suspends softball player for cannabis violation**

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

Mr Manson tested positive to cannabis after competing in the Men's National Softball League Finals on 28 February 2009. Upon receiving an application for provisional suspension from Softball New Zealand, the Tribunal provisionally suspended Mr Manson on 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 on 21 May 2009.

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

The Tribunal did not consider that there were any mitigating factors. There were aggravating factors in that Mr Manson is an experienced athlete who knew he was taking a prohibited substance which he took the night before the tournament.

The Tribunal decided a suspension of two months was appropriate in the circumstances. The Tribunal is required to take the provisional suspension period into account and credit this period against whatever total period of ineligibility (suspension) that the Tribunal imposes. The Tribunal questioned whether the provisional suspension period had much impact as the New Zealand softball season had been finished during this time. However the provisional suspension disturbed Mr Manson's plans to play softball either in Denmark or the United States and he has now put his softball career on hold for a year as a result. Therefore, the provisional suspension has had impact.

The Tribunal imposed a penalty where the overall effect is of a two month suspension. Mr Manson is suspended from two months from 30 March 2009.

The Tribunal was satisfied Mr Manson was sincere when he stated that the incident was a turning point in his life and he wanted something positive to come out of the situation and, if asked, he will convey the message to softballers that drug use in sport is a serious issue, with real consequences. The Tribunal further commented that despite Softball New Zealand's great efforts to promote awareness of doping obligations amongst its players, this was the second recent cannabis case before the Tribunal involving a softball player. The Tribunal issued a warning directed specifically to softball players that if they should appear before the Tribunal for a cannabis violation, the Tribunal may well impose tougher penalties on them.

The decision in this case will be made available for download from the website of the Sports Tribunal ([www.sporttribunal.org.nz](http://www.sporttribunal.org.nz)). See *Drug Free Sport New Zealand v Steven Manson* (ST 04/09). 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](mailto:info@sporttribunal.org.nz)).