

MEDIA RELEASE

29 January 2013

Rugby League Player Suspended for Cannabis Anti-Doping Violation

The Sports Tribunal has suspended rugby league player, Jared Neho, for testing positive for cannabis after competing in a Pirtek National Premiership match.

Mr Neho admitted smoking cannabis and that he knew it was a prohibited substance in competition. He gave evidence that he knew his obligations in relation to anti-doping and that he gave up smoking cannabis prior to the rugby league competition commencing. He withdrew from the team for family and work commitments. After he withdrew from the team he occasionally smoked cannabis again. However, due to injuries and unavailability of other players, he filled in. His position was that when he smoked the cannabis he had no intention of enhancing his sports performance.

The Tribunal accepted he did not intend to enhance his sports performance. There was an aggravating factor that he knew he should not be taking the substance and he played knowing the risk. There was a mitigating factor of his late call up into the team.

The Tribunal considered that the appropriate starting point for the penalty was four months' suspension. However, under the Sports Anti-Doping Rules, Mr Neho has to receive a credit for the period he has been provisionally suspended. This commenced on 11 December 2012 when the Tribunal provisionally suspended him. Because the time he has been provisionally suspended has been in the rugby league off season, when he would not have been playing, a credit for this period against a four month period of suspension would result in an effective suspension of less than four months.

Taking all the circumstances into account, the Tribunal considered the appropriate penalty was a 12 week suspension starting on 25 January 2013, which will prevent him from taking part in pre-season matches and activity.

The decision in this case is available for download from the website of the Sports Tribunal (www.sportstribunal.org.nz). See *Drug Free Sport New Zealand v Jared Neho* (ST 05/12). 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).