

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sports Tribunal suspends Touch player for cannabis violation

The Sports Tribunal has suspended touch player, George Playle, from participating in sport because of an anti-doping violation involving cannabis.

Mr Playle tested positive to cannabis after competing for Bay of Plenty at the 2009 New Zealand Open Touch Nationals.

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

The Tribunal considered that, unlike some recent cases, there were some mitigating factors. Mr Playle had not initially been selected for the team and was called up at relatively short notice. The Tribunal accepted evidence that at the time he used the cannabis he did not anticipate that he would be playing and that he would not have used cannabis if he had been selected for the team. The Tribunal also accepted that in the hurried circumstances of his call up into the team he had received no, or limited, information on Touch's anti-doping policy and his anti-doping obligations before taking part in the tournament.

The Tribunal however stated that cannabis is on the World Anti-Doping Agency Prohibited List and its use is banned in and around competitive sport. Athletes have an obligation to be aware of, and comply, with anti-doping rules. A penalty must be imposed.

The Tribunal considered a penalty of six weeks' suspension was appropriate in the circumstances. The Tribunal noted that this suspension would prevent him participating in rugby, which he was currently playing competitively, as well as Touch. The Tribunal suspended Mr Playle from participating in sport up to, and including, 2 September 2009.

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 George Playle* (ST 06/09). 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).