

MEDIA RELEASE

28 November 2005

The following is a summary of the decision of the Sports Disputes Tribunal of New Zealand in the case of **New Zealand Rugby League Inc v Wani Roberts** (SDT/13/05), an anti-doping violation application. This is not the written decision of the Tribunal for the purposes of its rules.

The Sports Disputes Tribunal has reprimanded and given a warning to Rugby League player Wani Roberts for committing an anti-doping violation involving cannabis.

Mr Roberts tested positive for the presence of cannabis after playing a game for the Northcote Club in July 2005.

Mr Roberts admitted smoking cannabis with friends at a party in the week before the game. In a letter to the Tribunal he apologised for bringing the game into disrepute and expressed remorse. The Tribunal accepted Mr Robert's evidence that he did not smoke cannabis for performance enhancing purposes. Also there was no suggestion that the cannabis use had placed any competitor in danger.

The Tribunal referred to the previous cases of *Boxing New Zealand Inc v Mene* (SDT/13/04) and *Touch New Zealand v Koro* (SDT/04/05). In those cases the Tribunal stated that the appropriate penalty is likely to be a reprimand and warning for a first offence with cannabis where it was not taken for performance enhancing purposes and the cannabis use represented no danger to others. However, if there were other aggravating circumstances then a different penalty may be appropriate.

The Tribunal found that there were no aggravating circumstances in this case, unlike some recent cases where athletes had smoked cannabis after signing participation agreements stating they would abide by anti-doping rules (which included not using cannabis). The Tribunal imposed penalties of suspension on those players.

As the cannabis use here was not for performance enhancing reasons, did not represent a danger to others, and there were no other aggravating circumstances, the Tribunal considered the appropriate penalty in this case was a warning and a reprimand. However, the Tribunal warned Mr Roberts that should he re-offend he would face a mandatory two year suspension.

For further information, contact Brent Ellis, Registrar, Sports Disputes Tribunal of New Zealand (telephone: 0800 55 66 80; e-mail: info@sportstribunal.org.nz).