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Rugby League Player suspended for 1 month for anti- doping rule violation

The Sports Tribunal has suspended a rugby league player for one month for the presence of 11-nor-delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol-9-carboxylic acid (a metabolite of THC), which is a specified substance prohibited in competition.

He was provisionally suspended without opposition on 8 February 2022 and admitted the violation but asked to be heard as to the appropriate sanction as he intended to engage in a treatment programme which provides for a reduced sanction.

The revised SADR 2021 recognises “substances of abuse” as illegal drugs misused in society, frequently used with no element of sports enhancement and out of competition. The reduced sanction from three to one month’s suspension applies if an athlete completes an approved “substance of abuse” treatment programme. It encourages a proactive approach to treatment and emphasises athlete health.

On 6 April 2022, the parties filed a joint memorandum by which DFSNZ approved the treatment programme underway and accepted a one-month sanction was appropriate.

The Tribunal imposed a period of one month ineligibility commencing 8 February 2022, conditional on the approved treatment programme being completed.

This case emphasises the need for athletes and those in support to be aware of the revised Rules and to move promptly to minimise sanction failing which three months suspension will apply.

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 Sincere Harraway* (ST 02/22).