

BETWEEN	SPORT INTEGRITY COMMISSION Applicant
AND	TUKAHA COOPER Respondent
AND	BASKETBALL NEW ZEALAND Interested party

**DECISION
20 NOVEMBER 2025**

Hearing	Decision on the papers – agreement on sanction
Parties	Didier Vaai & Hayden Tapper, Sport Integrity Commission Ben Forbes & David Bullock, counsel for Applicant Tukaha Cooper, Respondent Sarah Wroe, counsel for Respondent Maree Taylor, Basketball NZ (Interested Party)
Hearing Panel	Warwick Smith (Acting Chair)
Registrar	Luke Macris

Jurisdiction

1. Tukaha Cooper is a New Zealand basketball player and is registered with Basketball New Zealand (Basketball NZ). Basketball NZ has adopted the 2025 Sports Anti-Doping Rules (SADR) promulgated by the Sport Integrity Commission (the Commission) as their anti-doping policy.

Background & Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs)

2. A sample was collected from Mr Cooper at a National Basketball League event held in Wellington on 20 July 2025. The sample collected was urine and occurred In-Competition.
3. Analysis by a WADA-accredited laboratory (the Australian Sports Drug Testing Laboratory) of Mr Cooper's A sample returned an Adverse Analytical Finding (AAF) for the presence of Cannabinoids/Carboxy-THC (Cannabis) which is a Specified Substance prohibited In-Competition under section 8 of the 2025 WADA Prohibited List. It is classified as a Substance of Abuse.
4. On 24 October 2025, Ms Wroe (counsel for Mr Cooper) confirmed that Mr Cooper voluntarily accepted provisional suspension. The Tribunal made an order accordingly on 28 October 2025.
5. Mr Cooper had requested his B Sample be analysed on 10 October 2025, but this request was withdrawn on 28 October 2025. At that stage, the Commission had already submitted the B Sample for testing. The B Sample confirmed the A Sample.
6. On 7 November 2025, the Commission filed and served its Form 1 and evidence in support. The Commission alleged that Mr Cooper breached:
 - (a) SADR r. 2.1 (Presence of a Prohibited Substance or its Metabolites or Markers in an Athlete's Sample); and
 - (b) SADR r. 2.2 (Use or Attempted Use by an Athlete of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method).
7. On 10 November 2025, Mr Cooper filed and served his Form 2 and evidence in support. Mr Cooper admitted a violation of SADR r. 2.1 but sought to be heard on sanction. Mr Cooper did not admit the violation of SADR r. 2.2. Mr Cooper's evidence

is that he used Cannabis Out-of-Competition and that his use was unrelated to sports performance.

Joint Memorandum of Counsel

8. On 19 November 2025, the parties filed a joint memorandum of counsel in which the Commission, having considered Mr Cooper's evidence and the concentrations in the A and B Samples, accepted Mr Cooper's position that his Cannabis use had occurred Out-of-Competition and was unrelated to sport performance.
9. The Commission withdrew the allegation that Mr Cooper breached SADR r. 2.2, as it considered that there was insufficient evidence for the Tribunal to be comfortably satisfied that Mr Cooper Used Cannabis In-Competition.
10. The parties submitted that the appropriate sanction in relation to SADR r. 2.1 was to impose a three-month period of ineligibility reduced to one-month pursuant to SADR r. 10.2.4.1. as Mr Cooper had completed a substance of abuse treatment programme provided by Chris Ranui-Molloy of Recovery Street.
11. The parties submitted that it would be appropriate for the commencement of the period of ineligibility to run from when Mr Cooper voluntarily accepted provisional suspension on 24 October 2025 in accordance with SADR r. 7.4.3.

Sanction – substance of abuse

12. SADR r 10.2.4 sets out sanctions for athletes who have taken Prohibited Substances which are Substances of Abuse.
13. SADR r 10.2.4.1 provides that:

If the *Athlete* can establish that any ingestion or *Use* occurred *Out-of-Competition* and was unrelated to sport performance, then the period of *Ineligibility* shall be three months *Ineligibility*.

In addition, the period of *Ineligibility* calculated under this Rule 10.2.4.1 may be reduced to one month if the *Athlete* or other *Person* satisfactorily completes a *Substance of Abuse* treatment program approved by the *Commission*. The period of *Ineligibility* established in this Rule 10.2.4.1 is not subject to any reduction based on any provision in Rule 10.6.

14. In terms of the commencement of the period of ineligibility, SADR r 7.4.3 provides that:

Upon such voluntary acceptance, the *Provisional Suspension* shall have the full effect and be treated in the same manner as if the *Provisional Suspension* had been imposed under Rule 7.4.1 or Rule 7.4.2;

Decision

15. Having considered the joint memorandum of counsel and the evidence, the Tribunal is satisfied that it is appropriate to conclude, on balance, that Mr Cooper's use of Cannabis occurred Out-of-Competition and was unrelated to sport performance. Accordingly, the starting point for the applicable period of ineligibility is three months.
16. The Tribunal further accepts, in accordance with SADR r. 10.2.4.1, that the sanction period of three months ineligibility be reduced to one month because Mr Cooper has completed a substance of abuse programme that has been approved by the Commission.

Orders

17. The Tribunal **orders** as follows:
 - (i) A period of ineligibility from participation in any capacity in a competition or activity organised, sanctioned, or authorised by any sporting organisation that is a signatory to the SADR, of one month is imposed on Mr Cooper under SADR r. 10.2.4.1 backdated to commence on 24 October 2025 (the date Mr Cooper voluntarily accepted provisional suspension).
 - (ii) This means Mr Cooper is ineligible to participate in competitive sports until 24 November 2025.
 - (iii) This determination should be the final determination by the Tribunal in this matter, and it may be published in the usual way.

Appeal routes & deadlines

18. Mr Cooper is a National-Level Athlete. Appeal routes are set out at SADR 13.2 and, in accordance with SADR 13.2.3.5, the time to file an appeal to Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS) is twenty-one (21) days from the date of receipt of the decision by the appealing party.
19. The address to which any appeal should be sent to is:

Anti-Doping Division:
Palais de Beaulieu
Avenue Bergières 10
CH-1004 Lausanne, Switzerland
Email address: antidoping@tas-cas.org

Dated: 20 November 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warwick Smith', with a stylized, flowing script.

Warwick Smith
Acting Chair