



DECISION FORM

To be sent to discipline@rugbyeurope.eu.

Particulars of offence	
Player's Name: Ignacio Pineiro Molla	
Player's number: 4	
Player's union: Spain	
Competition: Rugby Europe Men's Championship (2025)	
Host Team (T1): Spain	Visiting Team (T2): Netherlands
Venue: Estadio Central UCM Madrid	
Date of match: February 2 nd , 2025	
Rules to apply: Regulation 17 World Rugby Handbook; or Tournament Disciplinary Program; or Other	
Referee Name: Sam Grove White	
Plea: <input type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not admitted	
Offence: <input type="checkbox"/> Red card <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citing <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
If "Other" selected, please specify:	
Hearing details	
Chairperson / JO: Antony Davies (ENG)	
Other Members of the Disciplinary Panel:	
- Dany Roelands (BEL)	
- Bartek Marczyński (POL)	
Hearing date: February 7 th , 2025	
Hearing venue: On remote	
Appearance Player: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Appearance Union: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Player's Representative(s): Eliseo Patron Costas, Alejandro Hortas (observer)	
Other attendees: David Baird-Smith (Rugby Europe)	
List of documents/ materials considered by the Panel:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC report • Video clip provided by the CC report • Medical report • Statement from the victim • Statement from the Dutch Physio • Statement from the Union & Answer to pre-hearing questions asked by RE • Statement from the Player • Two video clips provided by the Union • Disciplinary record and playing schedule of the player 	
Summary of essential elements of citing / Referee's report / Incident footage	
<p>The citing report of the Citing Commissioner, Tim Lowry, dated 3rd February 2025 referred to an incident commencing 36.03 in the first half and lasting for 13 seconds, which he described in the following terms :</p> <p><i>"In the game between Spain and Netherlands on 2/2/25 at match time 36.03, Netherlands 1 (Ruijgrok) receives the ball from his left and takes the ball into contact. He is engaged by Spain 4 (Ignacio Pineiro Molla) and Spain 8 (Nieto). Spain 4 wraps his left arm around the neck of Netherlands 1 whilst Spain 8 moves downwards with</i></p>	

his arms around Netherlands 1's legs. Spain 4 continues to clench the Netherlands 1 neck in his left arm from match time 36.03 until the Referee's whistle at 36.16, a period of 13 seconds. At the point when the Referee calls "maul" at match time 36.09, the Netherlands 1 player can be seen repeatedly slapping using his right hand to slap the Spain 4's left upper arm."

When the Referee blows his whistle at 36.16 to end the maul, Netherlands 1 remains on the ground until match time 36.46, some 30 seconds whilst receiving medical attention.

The Referee communicates "no foul play" from the TMO report and the game restarts with a scrum to Spain.

I have taken into account the fact that the TMO communicated to the Referee that there was no foul play and the Referee in turn communicated this to the players. However, based on the evidence I have gathered, this is incorrect.

The Citing Commissioner went on to set out the specifics of the contact which are not reproduced here as they form part of the Committee's findings.

A statement from the victim player, Netherlands 1, was considered, which deposed as follows :

"Late in the first half, near the opposition tryline, I was passed the ball from a ruck to carry. I was stopped by two defenders, one defender in question wrapped his arm around my neck and squeezed tightly. This made it difficult for me to breathe and I slapped his arm several times to inform him of his actions. His actions forced me to release the ball in an attempt to begin breathing again. I then fell to the floor and recovered to carry on playing."

We then viewed the match footage in which the incident was depicted clearly, as were the timings. The incident shown was consistent with the Citing Commissioner's report,

We also noted that the Citing Commissioner had cited two law references :

- Law 9.11 – dangerous play – players must not do anything that is reckless or dangerous to others, including leading with the elbow or forearm or jumping into or over a tackler; and
- Law 9.20(b) – dangerous play in a ruck or maul – a player must not make contact with an opponent above the line of the shoulders.

Essential elements of other evidence (e.g. medical reports)

Summary of player's evidence

The Player and his representative had fully engaged with the process and we considered the response to directions confirming the Player's position and a personal statement from him. He and his representative expanded upon both at the hearing.

The Player partially accepted the citing in that he confirmed what he did was dangerous and was foul play warranting a penalty or a yellow card, but did not pass the red card threshold.

The Player said that as he entered the tackle, he went straight for the height of the ball to try and block the ball carrier and keep him on his feet. As soon as he made contact, both his hands were on the ball and his head was positioned up as he was looking towards the Referee to ensure he could see and hear the Referee calling either a maul or for him to release the ball carrier. He said he heard the Referee shout “maul” and decided to maintain his position and keep hold of the ball. The attacking player was fighting to get to the ground and at the same time he was trying to keep the player up whilst holding onto the ball. He said he had no intention of playing with the neck of the player and did not even realise during the moment the actual position of the attacking player’s head. Once he saw the player on the ground after the incident, he became concerned and went to check that he was OK. He wanted to make it clear that he never had any intention to cause any harm to the opponent.

When questioned by the Committee, he maintained that he had no idea he had made contact with the opponent’s neck and had no recollection of the opponent tapping him repeatedly on his arm to let go his grip. He did accept that the match footage showed his arm around the neck of the opponent for 13 seconds and that that was dangerous, though, not in his view, worthy of a red card.

Findings of fact

With regard to the law reference, we characterised the offending under Law 9.20(b), dangerous play in a maul involving contact with an opponent above the line of the shoulders.

We next considered how the Match Officials had dealt with the matter on the field. What we saw in the match footage, and was described by the Citing Commissioner and confirmed by the victim player, was a clear and obvious act of serious foul play involving the following :

- Netherlands 1 is in a neck/chokehold for 13 seconds based on the video evidence, match time 36.03 to 36.16.
- Netherlands 1 stated that his neck was “squeezed tightly”
- Netherlands 1 stated that the actions of Spain 4 “made it difficult for me to breathe”
- Netherlands 1 stated that the actions of Spain 4 “forced me to release the ball in an attempt to begin breathing again”
- Netherlands 1 was in a vulnerable position – his neck and head were held tightly by Spain 4, who was exerting upward force and pressure to keep him from going to ground, whilst Spain 8 had his arms wrapped round Netherlands 1’s legs attempting to pull him to ground. Other players joined the maul, exerting forces in different directions, none of which the Netherlands 1 had any control over, and he could take no action to improve his position.

Given these findings, we had no difficulty concluding that the act comfortably passed the red card threshold and therefore upheld the citing.

As we found contact with the neck World Rugby’s mandatory mid-range entry point became engaged. We rejected Mr. Costas’ suggestions that it would be wholly disproportionate to apply that because we could not make that consideration until we had decided upon a sanction.

Decision

Proven Not proven Other disposal (please state)

SANCTIONING PROCESS

Assessment of seriousness <i>As per Article 4.5 of Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations and Regulations 17 of World Rugby</i>
Assessment of intent:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intentional/deliberate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reckless
State reasons:
The decision to grab the player round the neck was, in our view, deliberate but it had a legitimate rugby purpose in attempting to set up and then prolong a maul to effect a turnover of possession. However, the Player was reckless in holding onto the neck with force in the maul and for so long.
Nature of actions
Please see previous description and findings of fact.
Existence of provocation:
None found.
Whether player retaliated:
N/A
Self-defence:
N/A
Effect on victim:
The victim described his neck being squeezed tightly, making it difficult for him to breathe and having to slap the arm of the opponent several times. He was forced to release the ball in an attempt to begin breathing again. He fell to the floor and needed treatment from the Physio for 30 seconds, but fortunately was able to carry on playing until later substituted, but not as a result of this incident.
Effect on match:
None.
Vulnerability of victim:
For the reasons described in findings of fact, the vulnerability was high as the victim could do nothing to change or improve his position.
Level of participation / premeditation:
Full for 13 seconds.
Conduct completed / attempted:
Conduct completed as contact remained engaged until the Referee blew for the end of the maul.

Other features of player's conduct:

Entry point

Low-end <input type="checkbox"/>	Weeks [XX]	Mid-range <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Weeks 4	Top end <input type="checkbox"/>	Weeks [XX]
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Reasons for selecting entry point:

Mandatory mid-range entry point engaged due to clear neck contact.

Relevant off-field mitigating factors

As per Article 4.5 of Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations and Regulations 17 of World Rugby

Acknowledgement of guilt and timing:

It was noted on the match footage that when the Player noticed the opponent on his hands and knees, he did check that he was OK. He had always accepted that he had carried out an act of foul play and that the act was dangerous. As the Match Officials had declared there to be no foul play, we felt that he should have full credit for his acknowledgement and should not be penalised by asking the Panel to determine whether the red card threshold was passed.

Player's disciplinary record / good character:

The Player is 23, but regarded as a roll model in the squad and has quickly become Vice Captain of the Spanish team. He has one previous suspension for a week as a result of a citing in a Club 7's competition for contact in the air. This was three years ago, dissimilar and insufficiently proximate. He has one other yellow card so has a good record internationally and with his Club Oyonnax Rugby Espoirs.

Youth and inexperience of player:

Although relatively young, the Player is experienced.

Conduct prior to and at hearing:

The Player fully engaged with the process throughout.

Remorse and timing of Remorse

Immediately he suspected an injury, he checked on the victim player and expressed relief that he got up and continued to play.

Other off-field mitigation:

Number of weeks deducted: 2

Summary of reason for number of weeks deducted:

Additional relevant off-field aggravating factors*As per Article 4.5 of Rugby Europe Disciplinary Regulations and Regulations 17 of World Rugby***Player's status as an offender of the Laws of the Game:**

None found

Need for deterrence:

None found

Any other off-field aggravating factors:

None found

Number of additional weeks: 0**Summary of reason for number of weeks added:****SANCTION**

NOTE: Players ordered off or cited by a citing commissioner are provisionally suspended pending the hearing of their case, such suspension should be taken into consideration when sanctioning – RE Discipline Regulations 4.1.4 / 4.4 (or equivalent Tournament rule)

Total sanction: 2 weeks/matches	<input type="checkbox"/> Sending off sufficient
Sanction commences: 02/02/25	
Sanction concludes: 17/02/25	
Matches/ tournaments included in sanction: 09/02/25 Switzerland v Spain Rugby Europe Men's Championship 2025 and 16/02/25 Spain v Georgia Rugby Europe Men's Championship 2025. The Player indicated that he may wish to make use of the Coach Intervention Programme and the CISM Process. As this incident involved contact with the neck, the Panel agreed that whilst the two week/match suspension would remain, the Player can apply to undertake a CISM which, if completed successfully, will remove one match from the suspension and in that case the match involved will be Spain v Georgia 16/02/25 and the Player will be free to play in that match. The suspension will then end on 10/02/25.	
Costs: None sought or awarded	

Signature

Name of the JO or Chairman: Antony Davies

Date: 11th February 2025

Signature (JO or Chairman):

Antony Davies

NOTE: You have 48 hours from notification of the decision of the chairman/jo to lodge an appeal with the tournament director – RE Discipline Regulations 4.6.2 (or equivalent Tournament rule)