SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO
FINNISH RUGBY FEDERATION

DECISION FORM

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE			
Player's Name	Tharinda Kapuwatta		
Player's Club	Tampere Rugby Club		
Match	Tampere Rugby Club vs Old Town Shamrocks Porvoo		
Competition	Miesten SM-Sarja		
Date of match	16.8.2025		
Match Venue	Rahola, Tampere		
Rules to apply	2025 SRL Competition Regulations & World Rugby Regulation 17		
Referee Name	Alessandro Begnoni	**Plea**	☒ Admitted ☐ Not admitted
Offence	9.13 - A player must not tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously	☒ Red card ☐ Citing ☐ Other If "Other" selected, please specify:	

PANEL DETAILS			
Hearing date	On papers	**Hearing venue**	Via Slack
Chairperson/JO	Palemia Field		
Other Members of the Disciplinary Panel	George Mossford Stephen Whittaker		
List of documents / materials provided to Player in advance of hearing	1. Referee's Report on the ordering off		

SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CITING/REFEREE'S REPORT/INCIDENT FOOTAGE

In the match, the referee provided the following report as a result of a sending off (Red Card):

> *On the 79th minute, OTS player #15 while carrying the ball in open play, got tackled by TRC player #23, at the proximity of the 22m line, at 5 meters from the touchline. TRC player #23 went to tackle with the shoulder only without any attempt to grab the player, and hit directly the head. I immediately stopped the game .*
>
> *I deemed the situation as a direct contact to the head with an high degree of danger, given the force of the head impact. After consulting with my ARs we didn't perceive any mitigating factor and therefore I issued the red card and restarted the game with a penalty against TRC.*
>
> *The player immediately admitted the contact to the head with the shoulder only and apologized for the action.*

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF OTHER EVIDENCE (e.g., medical reports)
None was provided.

SUMMARY OF PLAYER'S EVIDENCE

The Player's club provided the following evidence:

The OTS number 15 made a run down the right-hand touchline. Tampere number 19 attempted a tackle, initially missed, but was able to grab ahold of OTS15's shirt and pull himself in close enough to begin bringing down OTS15. Tampere numbers 12 & 23 rush across to support the tackler. As TRC19 slides down OTS15's legs, TRC12 & TRC23 drop their height in order to assist in the tackle and ensure that OTS15 is taken to ground. OTS15 was on his way to ground when TRC23 arrived and made contact with OTS15's head. TRC23 admits that contact with the head was made and that is indeed foul play, but that it was unintentional foul play due to OTS15 already being so low to the ground. We also contest that there is indeed an attempt to use arms in the tackle. TRC12's presence prevents TRC23 from being able to fully extend his right arm, but it can be seen in the moment after contact that both of TRC23's hands are holding onto OTS15.

According to the World Rugby Head Contact Process - Law Application Guidelines, this may indeed fall under a tackle that has a mid to high degree of danger, but with significant mitigating circumstances. The mitigation is that the OTS15's head is so low, due to the initial tackle of TRC19, that even when TRC23 attempts to lower his height, contact is still made to the head of OTS15. According to the guidelines, head contact with a high degree of danger should only result in a Yellow Card when there is mitigation.

As evidence, we have clipped the video showing the event at full-speed, half-speed, quarter speed and frame-by-frame. In the frame-by-frame images, it is clear that both TRC12 & TRC23 have lowered their heights to what would be an appropriate tackle height if the player being tackled was upright. TRC23 is even lower than TRC12. You can clearly see TRC9 standing behind them both and the difference in height of an upright player versus players in a lowered tackling position. OTS15 is on his way down and so his head is also lower than would normally be. You can also see from the video that the hands of TRC23 are still holding onto OTS15 as TRC23 falls away, indicating that there was indeed an attempt to use his arms in the tackle.

TRC23, Tharinda Kapuwatta, admits unintentional foul play with significant mitigating circumstances that would warrant a Yellow card according to the World Ruby Head Contact Process Guidelines. It should also be noted that the player has no history of foul play or disciplinary action against him and would like that also to be taken into consideration.

Still frame of impact:

Frames post impact:

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The Player's club also provided a clip of the incident, and a link to the entire match as streamed.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Disciplinary Panel noted that The Player admitted the incident was Foul Play but contested that the Foul Play was at the Red Card Threshold.

In this instance, "the burden of proof rests on the Player to demonstrate that the referee was wrong".

As a Panel we were reminded by the Player's club of World Rugby's Law application guideline of the Head Contact Process (HCP) dated 9th March 2023. Our findings of fact follow this process for clarity:

1. Has Head Contact occurred?
   Admitted by the Player.

2. Was there any foul play?
   World Rugby emphasises the "power of choice" for tacklers. In this instance, even though other players were involved, the Player still is required to assess the situation. He had a choice to be involved in the tackle; the contact was therefore avoidable and is foul play.

3. What was the degree of danger?
   We considered the evidence of the Player and viewed the incident several times. This is not a high degree of danger in that while there was direct contact, the force was relatively low. We consider it to be of a mid-range.

At this point the Panel stopped consideration in the HCP as the incident was no longer deemed to be at the red card threshold.

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This finding of facts is no way questioning the decision making of the on-field officials, and we fully recognise “the integrity of Law 6.5(a) of the Laws of the Game and the referee’s position as the ultimate judge of fact and law during the Match is unassailable.” However, we are satisfied, with the benefit of multiple viewings of the incident at real speed and the frame-by-frame analysis together with the evidence provided by the Player’s club, that the incident does not reach the Red Card Threshold.

The Ordering Off is expunged from the Player’s disciplinary record and he is free to play immediately.

DECISION
☐ Proven ☐ Not proven ☒ Other disposal (please state)
The Ordering Off (Red Card) is expunged from the Player’s disciplinary record

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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 – As per SRL Competition Regulations and (or equivalent Tournament rule)

Total sanction	(X) week	☐ Sending off sufficient
Sanction commences		None
Sanction concludes		n/a
Matches/tournaments included in sanction		The Player is free to return to play immediately.

Costs	N/A

Date	19.8.2025
Signature (JO or Chairman)	

NOTE: You have 48 hours from notification of the decision of the chairman/jo to lodge an appeal with the tournament director – SRL Competitions Regulation 5.5.1 (or equivalent Tournament rule)