

DISCIPLINARY DECISION



Match	New Zealand v Fiji		
Competition	HSBC SVNS Dubai		
Date of match	30 November 2025	Match venue	7he Sevens, Dubai
Applicable rules	Regulation 17 World Rugby Handbook; Tournament disciplinary manual		

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

Player's surname	Vunaki	Player's forename(s)	Ilikimi
Player's Union	Fiji RFU	Date of birth	10.06.01
Referee's name	AJ Jacobs		
Foul Play	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not admitted	Red card warranted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not admitted
Offence	9.13: A player must not tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously. Dangerous tackling includes, but is not limited to ... attempting to tackle an opponent above the line of the shoulders ...	SELECT: Red card <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citing <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If "Other" selected, please specify:	
Summary of Sanction	3 matches		

HEARING DETAILS

Hearing date	30.11.25	Hearing venue	7he Sevens, Dubai
Chairman/JO	Scott Hutton		
Other Members of Disciplinary Committee	None		
Appearance Player	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Appearance Union	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Player's Representative(s)	Willie Baleinabuli, Team Manager Osea Kolinisau, Coach	Disciplinary Officer and/or other attendees	Brian Hammond – Disciplinary Officer Joyce Hayes, World Rugby (in attendance)
List of documents/materials provided to Player in advance of hearing	RC Report Video Clips of Incident		

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

Direct contact to head with a high degree of danger; no mitigation

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF OTHER EVIDENCE (e.g. medical reports)

Incident occurred in the last play of the game.
NZ15 subsequently passed an HIA.

SUMMARY OF PLAYER'S EVIDENCE

Player ("Fiji 6") reviewed the video footage and accepted the RC and acknowledged the offence. Fiji 6 also noted that the tackle was made in the last play of the game with Fiji defending a narrow lead and there was no malice in the tackle. Fiji Coach also added that Fiji 6 was attempting to wrap with his left arm.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Fiji 6 accepted the RC and therefore we move to mitigation.

Reg. 17.18 - Seriousness of the Incident

The first stage is to consider the seriousness of the incident to determine the entry point for the sanction. As this incident involved head contact, the first note to Appendix 1 of Reg.17 confirms that the entry point must be at least mid-range. The factors I have considered from Reg.17.18 include:

- (a) The tackle was reckless.
- (b) The tackle involved shoulder to the head of the ball carrier.
- (c) There was no provocation that I am aware of.
- (d) The incident was avoidable.
- (e) The offence was completed in a reckless manner but without premeditation;
- (f) The incident occurred in the last play of the game with Fiji defending a narrow lead. NZ scored from this play to win the match.
- (g) Neither player was injured.

The first note to the World Rugby Sanctions states that:

"Any act of foul play where the person committing the act of foul play makes contact with an opponent's head and / or neck, and that contact with the head and / or neck warrants a red card, shall result in at least a mid-range sanction."

In all the circumstances noted above, I believe that a mid-range entry point of 6 weeks is appropriate.

17.19 Mitigating Factors

The second stage is to consider mitigating factors under Reg. 17.19. Factors I have considered are:

- (a) Fiji 6 acknowledged the offence and accepted the RC.
- (b) Fiji 6 has never received an RC in his rugby career and has been playing on the international circuit for 3 years without any previous RCs.
- (c) Fiji 6's conduct at the hearing was very polite and respectful.
- (d) Fiji 6 was unable to shake hands with NZ15 as he was with the physio at the time but he did try to see the player.
- (e) NZ15 was uninjured and passed a HIA.

For these reasons, I award full mitigation to Fiji 6 of 50% and, therefore, the sanction will be reduced to 3 matches.

17.20 Aggravating Factors

I am not aware of any aggravating factors in this situation.

Matches / tournaments included in the sanction

Total sanction is **3 matches**. Matches included in this sanction are:

- 1. HSBC SVNS DXB - 30.11.26; Fra v Fiji –3rd place play off.
- 2. HSBC SVNS Cape Town – 06.12.25; Fiji's first pool match.
- 3. HSBC SVNS Cape Town – 06.12.25; Fiji's second pool match.

DECISION

Foul play	Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Determined <input type="checkbox"/> Not determined <input type="checkbox"/> Other disposal (please state) <input type="checkbox"/>
Red card warranted	Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Determined <input type="checkbox"/> Not determined <input type="checkbox"/> Other disposal (please state) <input type="checkbox"/>

SANCTIONING PROCESS

ASSESSMENT OF SERIOUSNESS

Assessment of Intent – R 17.18.1(a)-(b) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
Intentional <input type="checkbox"/>	Reckless <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
State Reasons	
High tackle made without malice but with force and a high degree of danger	
Nature of actions – R 17.18.1(c) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
High tackle (shoulder to head)	
Existence of provocation – R 17.18.1(d) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
N/A	
Whether player retaliated – R 17.18.1(e) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
N/A	
Self-defence – R 17.18.1(f) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
N/A	
Effect on victim – R 17.18.1(g) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
Player passed subsequent HIA	
Effect on match – R 17.18.1(h) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
None. Final play of the game from which NZ scored to win.	
Vulnerability of victim – R 17.18.1(i) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
High.	
Level of participation/premeditation – R 17.18.1(j) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
Full	
Conduct completed/attempted – R 17.18.1(k) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
Completed	
Other features of player's conduct – R 17.18.1(l) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
N/A	

ASSESSMENT OF SERIOUSNESS CONTINUED

Entry point <i>(select entry point and indicate n° of weeks/matches starting point)</i>		
<u>Top end</u> * <input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Mid-range</u> x	<u>Low-end</u> <input type="checkbox"/>
N° of Weeks/Matches	N° of Weeks/Matches: 6 matches	N° Weeks/Matches

*If Top End, the JO or Panel should identify, if appropriate, an entry point between the Top End and the maximum sanction and provide the reasons for selecting this entry point, below.

In making this assessment, the JO/Committee should consider World Rugby Regulations 17.18.1(a), 17.18.1(g), and 17.18.1(h) or the equivalent provisions within the Tournament Rules referred to above.

Reasons for selecting Entry Point above Top End
N/A

RELEVANT OFF-FIELD MITIGATING FACTORS

Acknowledgement of commission of foul play – R 17.19.1(a) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	Player's disciplinary record – R 17.19.1(b) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
Yes	Clean record
Youth and/or inexperience of player – R 17.19.1(c) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	Conduct prior to and at hearing – R 17.19.1(d) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
N/A	Very good. Polite and respectful.
Remorse and timing of remorse – R 17.19.1(e) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	Other off-field mitigation – R 17.19.1(f) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
Attempted to see opposing player	Playing on the international circuit for 3 years with no disciplinary record.

Number of weeks/matches deducted

3

Summary of reason for number of weeks/matches deducted:

Player acknowledged the offence and attempted to see the NZ player but was unable to do so. Player has no disciplinary record and his conduct at the Hearing was very good.

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT OFF-FIELD AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Player's status as an offender of the Laws of the Game – R 17.20.1(a) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
N/A
Need for deterrence – R 17.20.1(b) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
Covered with entry point
Any other off-field aggravating factors – R 17.20.1(c) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
None


Number of additional weeks/matches

0

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 – R 17.12.5(f) / 17.13.7 (or equivalent Tournament rule)

Total sanction	3 matches	Sending off sufficient <input type="checkbox"/>
Sanction commences	30 November 2025	
Sanction concludes	06 December 2025	
Matches/tournaments included in sanction	1. HSBC SVNS DXB; 30.11.25; FRA v FIJI (3 rd place play-off) 2. HSBC SVNS Cape Town; 06.12.25; 1 st Pool Game 3. HSBC SVNS Cape Town; 06.12.25; 2 nd Pool Game	
Costs	None	

Signature (JO or Chairman)		Date	30 November 2025
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NOTE: YOU HAVE **48 HOURS (15s) / 24 HOURS (7s)** FROM NOTIFICATION OF THE DECISION OF THE CHAIRMAN/JO TO LODGE AN APPEAL WITH THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR – R 17.24.2(a) / R 17.38.1 (or equivalent Tournament rule)