

DISCIPLINARY DECISION



Match	USA v Portugal		
Competition	Nations Cup		
Date of match	04/07/2026	Match venue	Denver
Applicable rules	Regulation 17 World Rugby Handbook and Expedited Off Field Sanctioning Process.		

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

Player's surname	Vicente	Player's forename(s)	Pedro
Player's Union	Portugal	Date of birth	07/11/2002
Referee's name	Gianluca Gnechi		
Foul Play	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input type="checkbox"/> Not admitted	Red card warranted	<input type="checkbox"/> Admitted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not admitted
Offence	9.12. A player must not physically abuse anyone.	SELECT: Red card <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citing <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> If "Other" selected, please specify:	
Summary of Sanction	3 weeks		

HEARING DETAILS

Hearing date	07/07/2026	Hearing venue	Zoom Call
Chairman/JO	Philippe Cavalieros		
Other Members of Disciplinary Committee	Bogdan Zebeda (former international player) Ruhan Straeuli (former player)		
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)	José Carlos Augusto (Attorney) Francisco Martins (VP Union) Carlos Polainas (Team Manager)	Disciplinary Officer and/or other attendees	Brian Hammond (Disciplinary officer) Joyce Hayes (Disciplinary & Eligibility Co-ordinator) Sophie Sharp (Intern)
List of documents/materials provided to Player in advance of Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Card Report dated 5 July 2026 signed by the Referee and the TMO ("RC Report"). TMO/FPRO Report on an ordering off dated 5 July 2026 signed by the TMO ("TMO/FPRO Report"). 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video clip footage of the incident with multiple angles and speeds (including slow-motion). • USA Injury update dated 5 July 2026 signed by Nick Colling, Men’s 15s Senior Team Manager (“USA Injury Update”). • Player’s registration form • Email from José Carlos Augusto, Advogado dated 6 July 2026 on the Player’s schedule of play and disciplinary record. • Provisional match fixtures • Response to the Standing Directions
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SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CITING/REFEREE’S REPORT/INCIDENT FOOTAGE

The RC Report provides :

“After TMO review the action of the player was a step on the side of the opponent. After review it was upgraded to RC as high degree of danger”.

The TMO/FPRO Report provides :

“I was TMO on the above game and also FPRO as there was no FPRO appointed. In the 64th minute of the game there was a breakdown just outside the USA 22m about 5m from touch. Jeremy Rozier (AR1) asked me to check the last breakdown as the USA player was gesturing to him that something had happened. After looking at the angles I saw Portugal 16 Pedro Vicente stamp to the side just below the ribs of the USA player. I told Gianluca (referee) we needed to formally review the incident. After showing Gianluca the angles we agreed that Pedro Vicente had his leg tangled by the USA player which would be a penalty but the retaliation by P16 with the stamp was more severe foul play and decided a yellow card with an off field review was the appropriate sanction. As FPRO during the 8min timeframe I reviewed the footage and could see the player look at the USA player on the floor and stamp with high force on him. I decided to upgrade the YC to a 20min Red Card as the degree of danger was high”.

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

The USA Injury Update provides:

“Benjamin Bonasso, who was on the receiving end of the red card action committed by Portugal’s #16, received minor bruises to the sternum. It is our medical teams opinion that it will not affect his availability for training this week”.

SUMMARY OF PLAYER’S EVIDENCE

In his Response to the Standing Directions received shortly before the Hearing, the Player submits that:

“At the time of the incident, the opponent was on the ground and continued to move into our player's path. In doing so, he made contact with our player's leg, causing our player to lose his balance. The contact between our player's foot and the opponent's body occurred as an involuntary consequence of that loss of balance, rather than as a deliberate act of stamping.”

During the Hearing however and as further developed below, the Player admitted that his act amounted to a foul play worthy of a yellow card but that the red card threshold was not met.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On-field Review:

Shortly after the 64th minute of the Match, Assistant Referee 1 asked the TMO to review the previous breakdown after a USA player gestured to him that an incident had occurred. The Referee, upon review of the footage with the TMO, decided to issue a Yellow Card and refer the matter to the FPRO (who was also the TMO). After review by the FPRO, the Referee upgraded the sanction to a 20-minute Red Card.

2. Procedural Background:

This matter has been referred by the FPRC for a full *de novo* hearing pursuant to Rule 17.25.4(d) of Regulation 17, and Rule 4.19 of the Expedited Off-Field Sanctioning Process (“Where the FPRC believes that a Red Card and/or Citing should be dismissed for any reason other than under Section 4.18 above, or where the FPRC decides that the matter requires a full *de novo* hearing for whatever reason in its absolute discretion, it shall refer a case to a Disciplinary Committee”).

3. Findings of Fact:

In the 64th minute, there was a breakdown just outside the Portugal 22-meter line, approximately 5m from touch. The Player attempted to clean out USA 6 in the forming ruck, and USA 6 went to ground on the side of the ruck. As the Player tried to move away, USA 6 executed what looked like a deliberate trip on the Player, who then pressed his right foot down onto USA 6 in the sternum area.

The best available footage, in the Panel’s view, is from the 3 FL Corner camera, from the fifth minute of the video clip onwards, where the Player can be seen looking down at USA 6 on the ground and then stamping on him with some force.

The first point for the Panel’s consideration was to decide whether the Red Card threshold was met. In doing so, the Panel reminded the Player at the Hearing that pursuant to Reg. 17.16.1(b), the Panel shall not make a finding contrary to the decision of the Referee unless it is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the decision of the Referee was wrong.

As summarised above, the Player presented a somewhat contradictory position, indicating first that he denied having committed any act of foul play, asserting that the incident was purely accidental,

and later admitting during the Hearing that he had committed an act of foul play worthy of a Yellow Card only.

However, the Panel considers that he failed to show, on the balance of probabilities, that a Red Card was not justified under the circumstances. On the basis of the footage, the Panel is satisfied that the act was executed with significant force and carried a high degree of danger. The Player's assertion that he applied no weight or force on USA 6 is rejected: it is inconsistent with what the footage clearly shows and was not established on the balance of probabilities. The Panel is therefore satisfied that the Referee was not wrong to issue a Red Card.

The Panel is satisfied that the act amounts to physical abuse, and more precisely stamping in the sense of Reg. 9.12.

Having established that the Referee was not wrong in issuing a Red Card, the Panel was left to assess the seriousness of the Foul Play pursuant to Reg. 17.18 in order to categorise that conduct as being at the lower-end, mid-range or top-end of the scale of seriousness, to identify the appropriate entry point for consideration.

The Player submitted at the Hearing that a low-end entry point was warranted as the act was reckless ("by mistake" as he put it), and he had tried to avoid the contact.

The Panel does not share this view. There are a number of factors which lead the Panel to conclude that a mid-range entry point is warranted, applying Reg. 17.18.

First, the Panel considers, on the basis of the footage, that the offending was intentional (Reg. 17.18.1(a)).

This is so because, contrary to the Player's allegations at the Hearing, the Player did not put all his weight on his left foot as he was trying to find his balance, but instead put significant pressure on his right foot down on USA 6 as evidenced below:



Moreover, as noted by the TMO/FPRO, he clearly looked down at USA 6 while exerting pressure. Had the Player genuinely attempted to avoid contact, the Panel considers that he would likely have tripped or fallen forward, looking ahead and exerting only mild pressure, for example with the front of his boot rather than with the entire outer sole (Reg. 17.18.1(c)). This is irreconcilable with an accidental or reckless tread (Reg. 17.18.1(b)), which would typically produce contact with the front of the boot, minimal weight transfer, and a forward trajectory of the Player's body.

Further, the Panel acknowledges that the Player was faced with some form of provocation as a result of USA 6 tripping him (Reg. 17.18.1(d)), and that his act was retaliatory in nature (Reg. 17.18.1(e)).

However, those factors do not displace a mid-range entry point for the following reasons.

First, the provocation did not come close to justifying the response. A trip, whilst itself a foul, did not expose the Player to any risk of serious injury warranting a physical response of this nature. The proportionality between the provocation and the retaliation is therefore markedly lacking, and the act cannot be characterised as self-defence (Reg. 17.18.1(f)).

Second, while the Panel accepts that provocation and retaliation are legitimate factors under Reg. 17.18.1(d) and (e), they must be weighed against the totality of the Reg. 17.18 factors rather than assessed in isolation. On that balancing exercise, the Panel is satisfied that the following factors collectively outweigh the provocation context: the act was intentional (Reg. 17.18.1(a)); it was executed with the full outer sole of the boot on a grounded and vulnerable opponent (Reg. 17.18.1(c), and (i)); the level of offending was full and the act was completed (Reg. 17.18.1(j) and (k)). Whilst the provocation is acknowledged, the deliberate nature of the response and the vulnerability of USA 6 at the time of the stamp are significantly aggravating features that a retaliatory context cannot neutralise. On balance, the mid-range entry point remains appropriate.

These factors, taken together, significantly outweigh the acknowledged provocation and the relatively minor injury sustained (bruises to the sternum) (Reg. 17.18.1(g)) and the absence of material effect on the match (Reg. 17.18.1(h)).

The act was not premeditated, and the Panel has taken that into account. It is nonetheless satisfied that the overall balance of the Reg. 17.18 factors supports a mid-range entry point.

For all these reasons, the Panel decided that a mid-range entry point is warranted under the circumstances.

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 type="checkbox"/> Determined <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reckless <input type="checkbox"/>
State Reasons	
See above	
Nature of actions – R 17.18.1(c) (or equivalent Tournament rule)	
See above	

Existence of provocation – R 17.18.1(d) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Whether player retaliated – R 17.18.1(e) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Self-defence – R 17.18.1(f) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Effect on victim – R 17.18.1(g) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Effect on match – R 17.18.1(h) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Vulnerability of victim – R 17.18.1(i) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Level of participation/premeditation – R 17.18.1(j) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Conduct completed/attempted – R 17.18.1(k) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
See above
Other features of player’s conduct – R 17.18.1(l) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
n/a

ASSESSMENT OF SERIOUSNESS CONTINUED

Entry point (select entry point and indicate n° of weeks/matches starting point)		
Top end* <input type="checkbox"/>	Mid-range <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Low-end <input type="checkbox"/>
N° of Weeks/Matches	N° of Weeks/Matches 6	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)
The Player acknowledged having committed an act of Foul Play during the Hearing.	The Player has a clean disciplinary 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)
The Player is 23 years old.	The Player’s conduct was good.
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)
The Player indicated that he had tried to apologise to USA 6.	n/a

Number of weeks/matches deducted

3

Summary of reason for number of weeks/matches deducted:

The Player is young, has a clean disciplinary record and shared some level of remorse.

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)
n/a
Any other off-field aggravating factors – R 17.20.1(c) (or equivalent Tournament rule)
n/a

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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 weeks	Sending off sufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sanction commences	8 July 2026		
Sanction concludes	24 or 27 September 2026 (inclusive) corresponding to Tbilisi Cup - Lusitanos round 1.		
Matches/tournaments included in sanction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11 July 2026 Nations Cup XV - Portugal vs Canada• 18 July 2026 Nations Cup XV - Portugal vs Tonga• 24 or 27 September 2026 Tbilisi Cup - Lusitanos round 1		
Costs	n/a		

Signature (JO or Chairman)		Date	8 July 2026
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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)