



# CALGARY RUGBY UNION

Box 5888, Station "A", Calgary, Alberta T2H 1Y4

Office: 403-255-9199 • Fax: 403-258-1075

Fields: 9025 Shepard Road SE

MEMBER  
Canadian Rugby Union  
Alberta Rugby Union  
Sports Alberta

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August 19, 2023

## Calgary Rugby Union Appeals Panel Judgement

**Governing Body:** Calgary Rugby Union (CRU)  
**Club:** Lethbridge Rugby Club (LRC)  
**Player:** Navid Azimi (LRC Player)  
**Appeal Panel:** Peter Rowe (CRU President)  
Catherine Laing (CRU VP Women's Rugby)  
Matt Suter (CRU VP Men's Rugby)

### Appeal Hearing

**Date:** Wednesday, August 16, 2023, 8:45 – 9:15 pm  
**Venue:** Teams Meeting Online  
**Attending:** Peter Rowe (President CRU)  
Catherine Laing (CRU VP Women's Rugby)  
Matt Suter (CRU VP Men's Rugby)  
Rory McKeown (LRC President)  
John McDonald (CRU VP Discipline)  
**Regrets:** Navid Azimi (LRC Player)

### Appeal's Background:

**Incident:** A serious act of foul play, committed intentionally with the Player's right fist striking the head of the victim player. The strike was delivered with significant force after the player loaded his body for maximum force and struck with a swinging motion often referred to as a "hay maker" causing the victim player to lose consciousness and sustained lacerations requiring stitches.

### Ruling:

An entry point of 20 weeks (expressed as matches) is required under the circumstances for the reasons which follow the high-end entry point of 10 matches is entirely unsuitable.

The player admits responsibility and professes remorse which I find to be genuine and sincere, he has no history as an offender of the game. I find that acceptance of responsibility and remorse particularly mitigating, and under the circumstances reduce the sanction by 3 weeks.

Total sanction is 17 weeks/matches.

### Appeal's Hearing

The Appeal's Board comprised of Peter Rowe (CRU President), Catherine Laing (CRU VP Women's) and Matt Suter (CRU VP Men's) held the appeal's meeting on



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Wednesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 8:45 pm. Other attendee's included Rory McKeown (LRC President) and John McDonald (CRU VP Discipline). The suspended player Navid Azimi did not attend the meeting.

The board reviewed the following evidence prior and at the meeting:

- The report of the VP Discipline for the suspension in question.
- The referee's and citing reports.
- The verbal representations of the suspended player Navid Azimi was not heard as he was not present for the hearing nor had anything presented.
- The verbal representations of the suspended player Navid Azimi club representative, Rory McKeown (President LRC).
- Video of the game the players received red cards or citing from.
  - o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu5cxtSQblk>

## Appeals Procedural Grounds:

Making a decision for which it did not have authority or jurisdiction as set out in its Dispute Resolution Policy
Appeal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is the assertion of the Lethbridge Rugby Club that due to the CRU VP discipline having previously been a member of the Lethbridge Rugby Club, that they should have recused themselves as the match (and incidents) in question involved both former club mates and current members of the CRU board, not allowing the CRU VP discipline to be 100% impartial.</li></ul>
Appeal Board Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The last season that John McDonald (CRU VP Discipline) was a member of the Lethbridge Rugby club was 2018 and left as a member in good standing. The Appeal's Board has ruled that a five-year separation is sufficient enough time, and the process of his discipline procedures are that John's decisions can be developed without bias and did not need to recuse himself.</li></ul>
Failing to follow procedures laid out in its approved policies
Appeal: NA
Appeal Board Decision: NA
Making a decision that was influenced by bias
Appeal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is the assertion of the Lethbridge Rugby Club that both the referee report and the CRU VP Discipline report/ruling were influenced by bias on the reasons that the referee report had some major discrepancies and despite claiming to not see much of the incident, named Navid Azimi in his report, based upon recommendations of the Calgary Canucks.</li></ul>



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- With respect to the VP discipline, there was bias towards either the Lethbridge player or to the club itself due to their past playing days with the Lethbridge Rugby Club and familiarity with the player.
- We also feel that the fact that the person who filmed the match made an edited "highlight" video of Lethbridge player incidents which were slowed down contributed to such bias.

## Appeal Board Decision:

- As stated above, the board has made the decision that there has been enough time away from the LRC and the procedures he follows to mitigate bias there maybe.
- The referee's report does explain the event but did not know the players' names until he received it after the game. The game did end abruptly and with the referee's not having the game sheet in hand may make it difficult to have a player's name on hand. and
- The board did not watch the altered shortened version of the strike to the head but did watch the full-length unedited video. It was clear to show that LRC player #1 (Navid Azimi) was in fact the player in question, and he did strike the Canucks player in the head.
- The VP Discipline did answer the questions regarding the watching of the 'shortened video' and the process he used. The board felt his response was sufficient and that the long version was the main source of his evidence to guide his decision making.
- After reviewing all the evidence above the Board rules that these accusations did not influence the decision process with bias.

## Failing to consider relevant information or taking into account irrelevant information in making the decision

### Appeal:

- It is the assertion of the Lethbridge Rugby Club on behalf of Mr. Navid Azimi that the VP Discipline ignored relevant information that was brought forward by the Lethbridge Rugby Club which provided context into the events that transpired.

### Appeal Board Decision:

- The board felt the VP Discipline did use all the information provided to him and did not ignore specifics that would have altered his decision at that time of decision making.

## Making a decision that was grossly unreasonable

### Appeal:

- It is the assertion of the Lethbridge Rugby Club on behalf of Mr. Navid Azimi that the VP discipline also mentions that Mr. Navid Azimi has no prior sanctions against him, showed remorse, and issues a 17-match suspension based on a single punch.



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## Appeal Board Decision:

- The act of strike to the head has the high entry point of +10 weeks depending on mitigating factors. I
- It is true that as mentioned above, no prior sanctions, and showing remorse are mitigating factors.
- The fact the player was knocked unconscious, received numerous stitches, at the time unknown to return to the game, the player was defenseless at the time of the strike to the head, and the force of the blow are also mitigating factors.
- The evidence of the player's return to rugby was unknown. The VP Discipline started at 20 weeks and mitigated down 3 games for displaying remorse and no prior sanctions.
- The Appeal's Board was presented evidence that the victim had returned to play in the beginning of August and felt that with this information the starting point for the sanction should be 15 weeks. By applying the same mitigating evidence of no prior sanctions and remorse shown to reduce the sanction by 3 weeks/matches.
- The Appeal's Board has altered the final decision to be 12 weeks/matches in total.

## Decision

The Appeal's Board understands that recent events have led to your involvement in an incident where striking to the head occurred during a rugby match. It is essential to address such incidents seriously, both for your personal growth and the integrity of the sport. We believe in providing players with guidance to ensure that such incidents are not repeated and to foster a culture of respect, safety, and sportsmanship. Your recent sanction of 17 weeks/matches will be mitigated to 12 weeks/matches based on the review of the incident from the appeals committee. See above for a detailed explanation.

## Cost

As the appeal was successful, the CRU will pay back the appeal's fee to the Lethbridge Rugby Club.

## Right of Appeal

Pursuant to regulation of the Rugby Alberta Discipline Guideline and Procedures 2008, there is no right of appeal from this decision.

## Appeal's Board Future Recommendations

- Accept Responsibility:



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- 
- Acknowledge your actions and take responsibility for your role in the incident. Recognizing your mistake is the first step towards growth and positive change.
  - Apologize and Learn:
    - Reach out to the affected player, referees, coaches, and teammates and offer a sincere apology. This demonstrates your commitment to making amends and learning from your mistakes.
  - Educate Yourself:
    - Attend workshops, seminars, or training sessions on player conduct, sportsmanship, and respect in rugby. Understanding the importance of fair play and maintaining composure is crucial for your development as a player and a person. (ex.
  - Teamwork and Leadership:
    - Lead by example on and off the field. Embrace the role of a positive influence within your team, emphasizing sportsmanship, respect, and camaraderie.
  - Anger Management:
    - If anger played a role in your actions, seek professional guidance on anger management techniques. Learning to control your emotions can significantly impact your behavior on the field.
  - Role Model Behavior:
    - Understand that young players look up to you as a role model. Your actions on and off the field can have a lasting impact on their understanding of sportsmanship and respect.

Regards,

## ***Calgary Rugby Union Appeals Board***

**Peter Rowe**  
**President**  
**Calgary Rugby Union**

**Catherine Laing**  
**VP Women's Rugby**  
**Calgary Rugby Union**

**Matt Suter**  
**VP Men's Rugby**  
**Calgary Rugby Union**