

International Judo Federation

Disciplinary Commission

Richard Galea Debono (presiding)

Colin Draycott (member)

Lukas Dusek (member)

Case Number DIS2024-06 (GEO) Guram Tushishvili
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Decision

Preamble – The Charge and the Legal Basis

The Disciplinary Commission recalls the charge issued by the Secretary General of the International Judo Federation with respect to Mr Guram Tushishvili (hereinafter “the Defendant”) issued on the 5th August 2024 referring to an incident occurring on the 2nd August 2024 during the Olympic Games, Paris 2024.

The Commission recalls that the Defendant has been charged as follows:

Subject: Notice of charge – IJF Sport and Organisation Rules (SOR) violation under Section 1.1.1 and Article 8.6

Dear Mr TUSHISHVILI

During day seven of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, on 2 August 2024, at the end of your contest in the +100 kg quarterfinals with Mr Teddy RINER (FRA) you demonstrated unsportsmanlike behaviour contravening the IJF Sport and Organisation Rules (version 22 July 2024).

We invite you to carefully read the contents of this letter which provides important information as to the consequences of the violation of the rules and regulations of the International Judo Federation (IJF) and next steps with the disciplinary proceedings.

Assertion of the IJF SOR, Section 1.1.1 Behaviour at IJF Events:

You are hereby informed that having demonstrated unsportsmanlike behaviour, you had committed a potential violation of the IJF SOR, pursuant to Section 1.1.1 thereof, which reads as follows:

“Everyone attending an IJF WJT event should always be mindful of their behaviour, following the judo values. Unacceptable behaviour, violence or aggression will not be tolerated. Any athlete who disrespects their opponent at the end of a contest risks disqualification, removal of prize money and of World Raking List (WRL) points and a disciplinary action may be initiated.”

Assertion of the IJF SOR, Article 8.6 Entry to and Exit from Field of Play:

When leaving the Field of Play, you intentionally took off your judogi jacket and therefore had committed a potential violation of the IJF SOR, pursuant to Article 8.6 thereof, which reads as follows:

“Athletes must enter and leave the field of play wearing their judogi in the proper way. It is not allowed to remove any part of the judogi or the belt or to add items of clothing or accessories (caps, sunglasses etc.) until the athlete has left both the field of play and the mixed zone.”

The IJF Ad Hoc Commission, composed of Mr MERIDJA (IJF Education and Coaching Commission Director), Mr ROUGÉ (IJF International Development and Promotion Director), Mr BARTA (IJF Head Sport Director) and Dr ALLAN (IJF Secretary General) met and took the decision to:

Suspend you with immediate effect and you can no longer continue in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games judo competitions and other judo activities pending the decision of the IJF Disciplinary Committee.

Next steps

Following the IJF Disciplinary Code Article 9 (version 4 May 2023, <https://www.ijf.org/ijf/documents/3>), we are referring the case to the IJF Disciplinary Committee.

The Commission recalls that the notice of charge included a number of documents being:

A report by the IJF Ad Hoc Commission which reads:

*During day seven of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, on 2 August 2024, Mr Guram TUSHISHVILI (GEO) at the end of his contest in the +100 kg quarterfinals with Mr Teddy RINER (FRA) demonstrated unsportsmanlike behaviour contravening the **IJF Sport and Organisational Rules (version 22 July 2024)**:*

Section 1.1.1 Behaviour at IJF Events:

“Everyone attending an IJF WJT event should always be mindful of their behaviour, following the judo values. Unacceptable behaviour, violence or aggression will not be tolerated. Any athlete who disrespects their opponent at the end of a contest risks disqualification, removal of prize money and of World Raking List (WRL) points and a disciplinary action may be initiated.”

Article 8.6:

“Athletes must enter and leave the field of play wearing their judogi in the proper way. It is not allowed to remove any part of the judogi or the belt or to add items of clothing or accessories (caps, sunglasses etc.) until the athlete has left both the field of play and the mixed zone.”

The IJF Ad Hoc Commission, composed of Mr MERIDJA (IJF Education and Coaching Commission Director), Mr ROUGÉ (IJF International Development and Promotion Director), Mr BARTA (IJF Head Sport Director) and Dr ALLAN (IJF Secretary General) met and took the decision to:

Suspend the athlete with immediate effect and the athlete can no longer continue in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games judo competitions and other judo activities pending the decision of the IJF Disciplinary Committee.

The second document was a WeTransfer file containing four video clips. They are marked as



3408-t47_hsk_agains
t_the_spirit_of_judo_tu:

this shall be considered as document 1. The Commission will be making its observations mainly on this particular clip, which shows the ippon, and the resultant events up to the point where the athletes left the tatami



3408-t47_hsk_agains
t_the_spirit_of_judo_tu:

this shall be considered as document 2. This is almost a copy of document 1



3411-tushushvili_witho
ut_judogi-Mat_2_C.mp

this shall be considered as document 3. This document shows the Defendant leaving the competition area without his judogi jacket.



3412-tushushvili_hand
_in_face-Mat_2_F.mp4

this shall be considered as document 4. This shows a close up of the event where the defendant places the palm of his right hand flat down on Mr Riner's face, for a brief moment lasting not more than one second.

The Commission recalls that the defendant had acknowledged receipt of the charge, and the Commission allowed her a period up to the 14th August 2024 to enter a statement of defence or inform the Commission if he wished a hearing.

The Defence

Within that time limit the Defendant responded in writing, as follows:

*First of all, I would like to **once** again **express** my heartache regarding the incident. Of course, what happened on the tatami between me and Teddy Riner **is** not acceptable in any way. From my **side** I am aware of the negative aspects of this fact and once again with this letter I accept my share of responsibility. I didn't have any personal conflict and I don't have any with Teddy. During our meetings I never have been rude to him. To confirm this, I will tell you that after the meeting that ended in my **favor** at the European Club Championship in Gori, I bowed as a sign of respect **and** raised his hand to emphasize the importance of his personality **and** to show respect. Unfortunately for me, I **didn't** get **the** same respect from him after he defeated me **at** the Olympics, instead of **just** standing **up** and celebrating his victory with the fans, he turned to me and with a kind of gesture, characteristic of a person who has a bogey in his heart, (which he confirmed later in one of the interview by emphasizing that he corrected my **account** and took revenge) he did all this in a totally unacceptable way for the sole purpose of humiliating me in front of millions of people. I'm not saying anything more **about** his tongue sticking out and humiliating and mocking gestures. Of course, with this explanation I'm not trying to justify my subsequent behavior I am **just** trying to explain to you **what** it feels like for a person*

who spends his whole life preparing to fulfill his dream, loses **on** the tatami and receives a humiliating and mocking response from his opponent **as** if he is everything and other person nothing.

I did not object the **fact that as a** punishment I was not given the opportunity to continue fighting even for the bronze medal. It was especially difficult for me not to be able to help my mixed team, which was the biggest punishment for me as the captain of the team.

In conclusion, I would like to tell you that I personally do not have any hatred towards Teddy Riner, I reacted to the mocking and unacceptable gesture, **as a** proof of this, I **want** to **express** my willingness to extend **a** friendly hand to him **at** the **first** opportunity and congratulate him on his Victory in the Olympic championship.

Further Evidence

In view of the position taken by Defendant, The Commission deemed it useful to ask the contest referee for a statement on the event, with particular reference to any gestures which Mr Riner might have made after ippon, which gestures may have been reasonably considered provocative toward the Defendant.

Mr Camacho Perez responded in writing as follows:

The undersigned, Mr. Raúl Camacho Pérez, referee of the contest in the +100 kg category, between Mr. Tushishvili GEO in wearing white judogi and Mr. Rinner FRA wearing blue judogi, at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games on the 2nd of august 2024 declares:

After a technical action from Mr. Rinner ippon was awarded.

Mr. Tushishvili didn't stop after Ippon was announced and holding the legs of Mr. Rinner also push with his own feet on the low stomach and inguinal part of Mr. Rinner made him falling onto the mat.

Mr. Tushishvili stood up immediately and went over Mr. Rinner who was laying on the mat and put his hand over Mr. Rinner face and pushed it backwards without any other previous action from Mr. Rinner which I could see from my angle of vision.

I called several times the attention of Mr Tushishvili and asked him to calm down and to come back to his position, with a loud voice, going closer to him, but no answer was received from his side.

After the pushing on his face was received Mr. Rinner tried to stand up close to Mr. Tushishvili and moved his arms for that reason, just in the same moment that Mr. Tushishvili was turning back and broke slightly his balance.

Mr. Tushishvili turned back again quickly and pushed with his legs/body to Mr. Rinner, made him falling again onto the mat.

I called him again to calm down and asked to Mr. Tushishvil to come back to the bowing position.

Both of them went to their position, talking to each other and when they were almost arriving to the bow position Mr. Tushishvili made one step ahead with energy trying to go closer to Mr. Rinner again.

At that moment I hold him by his arm and forced him to step back and put my body between both athletes and just in front of Mr. Tushishvili looking at him and asking him once more time to calm down and to go to his place.

When both of them were at his right places I gave a Hansokumake penalty for Mr. Tushishvili for an action against the spirit of judo, I announced the winner and both athletes bowed, shacked hands and went out of the contest area although even they still were making some small gestures to each other.

The Commission notified the Defendant with Mr Camacho Perez’s statement and offered him the opportunity to respond or even cross examine the witness.

The Defendant replied as follows:

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere respect for you as a referee and to convey my regret for the incident that occurred on the tatami between Teddy Riner and me, which may have caused you some inconvenience.

I do not dispute your account of the event. However, I would like to highlight that my actions were a reaction to the behavior and gestures of Mr. Riner, which you may not have observed. As evidence, I am including a photograph and kindly request that you review the video footage again, where it is clear that the provocative actions originated from him. As I mentioned in my previous letter, while this context does not excuse my subsequent behavior— for which I apologized immediately and accepted disqualification from both the individual and team competitions—I believe it is important to provide this additional perspective.

Thank you for your understanding, and I apologize once again for placing you in an uncomfortable situation.

The Defendant also exhibited the following three photographs which are marked GT1,2 and 3, in the order in which they appear hereunder.



Findings

The Commission finds that the Defendant concedes that his behaviour after the score of ippon was wrong, and he apologises for it. There is therefore no question of his being guilty as charged. Indeed, the video evidence speaks for itself and needs little elaboration, save as will be afforded below.

The defendant's only contention is that Mr Riner provoked him by being disrespectful towards him. He writes:

*"... instead of **just standing up** and celebrating his victory with the fans, he turned to me and with a kind of gesture, characteristic of a person who has a bogey in his heart, (which he confirmed later in one of the interview by emphasizing that he corrected my **account** and took revenge) he did all this in a totally unacceptable way for the sole purpose of humiliating me in front of millions of people. I'm not saying anything more **about** his tongue sticking out and humiliating and mocking gestures."*

While any such alleged provocation would still not acquit the Defendant from guilt, it would be taken into consideration in determining the sanction to be imposed, and any provocation may be considered a mitigating factor.

The Commission began by examining the video evidence in detail. Referring to document 1, the Commission notes that at 0.05¹, the action leading to ippon was completed.

Note that Riner has kumi kata on the Defendant. His right hand holding the left side of Defendant's collar, and the left hand holding the right-hand holding collar on the other side roughly below the Defendant's clavicle.

At point 0.7, Riner is rising, his right hand having left the collar, his left hand still in what appears to be the kumi kata position mentioned above. There is no expression on Riner's face which can be construed as mocking or untoward.

At point 0.8 – three seconds after the throw, with the referee still making the ippon sign, Riner is already off his feet, being pushed up by the Defendant. His back is to the camera, and we can only see his expression, which is one of glee, with both fists raised. This is seen in document GT1. The Commission cannot reasonably conclude that at this point Riner was doing anything other than celebrating, even while he was being unceremoniously lifted off both feet by the Defendant and sent tumbling backward onto the tatami.

The rest of the video clip speaks for itself, the hand on the face, the nudge to stop Riner from getting on his feet.

The Commission does not find that the photograph GT1 shows anything provocative. It is not certain that Riner's tongue is used in a mocking manner. The situation comes across as a common display of emotion. Furthermore, GT1 was taken at a time when the Defendant had already begun his unjustified upward lift with both legs lifting Riner off the tatami. The Defendant attempts to portray as being some form of provocation by Riner. The Commission is unconvinced of this interpretation .

Added to this, had there been any provocation, the Defendant's reaction was entirely out of order, and certainly did not in some way excuse his stripping off the judogi jacket while exiting the competition area.

¹ Reference is made to the time indicator at the bottom of the video clip

Considerations on the Appropriate Sanction

The Commission believes that among the main characteristics that distinguish Judo from other sports, is its insistence on respect, and on proper and self-controlled behaviour on the tatami. This concept is a fundamental element of what is known as “the spirit of Judo”. C

The Commission, in its attention to proportionality of the sanction to the offence recalls the following:

- A. The Defendant has been disciplined in the past. Reference is made to the following:
 - 10 April 2018 : admonition letter (fake back number),
 - 25 March 2019 - 24 May 2019 : 2 months suspension for taking part in other combat sport competition ;
 - 27 November 2023: Warning. EJU Case 2023-01: Alleged Assault on an Employee of the French Judo Federation during European Champ Montpellier 2023 (decision of the EJU Disciplinary Commission attached).

- B. The event was one of very high visibility. It was an Olympic semifinal, before a large crowd and probably viewed by countless others on television. The image of judo, and the educational aspect of it were disgraced by defendant’s behaviour.

- C. Defendant has already suffered a partial consequence and missed a repechage final and participation in the mixed teams event.

Decision

The commission finds the Defendant guilty as charged.

Having taken the above factors into consideration, the Commission decides to apply against the Defendant the sanction of a six-month (180 days) suspension from all Judo activities both at Continental level and at international level. Such suspension applies also to his membership rights, including the exercise of the rights and the holding of office related to sporting or sporting administration activities.

The period of suspension begins from the 30th August (date following the date of this decision) and ends on the 25th February 2025.

The Defendant is informed that this decision is subject to appeal to the IJF Disciplinary Appeal Commission.

The time limit for appeal shall be fifteen days from the receipt of the decision appealed against.

In the event of an appeal, should the IJF Disciplinary Appeals Commission, uphold this decision, the said Disciplinary Appeals Commission shall establish the new dates of the suspension.

Today the 29th day of August 2024, at 31/6 St Frederick Street, Valetta, Malta

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Galea Debono', written in a cursive style.

Richard Galea Debono
On behalf of the Disciplinary Commission