DECISION of the FEI TRIBUNAL

Dated 24 March 2026

(Reference No. FEI Tribunal: A25-0003)

In the matter of

Mr Simon DELESTRE (the Appellant)

vs.

FÉDÉRATION EQUESTRE INTERNATIONALE (the Respondent or the FEI)

together, the Parties

COMPOSITION OF THE FEI TRIBUNAL PANEL:

Mr Agustin Fattal Jaef (ARG), Sole Panel Member

INTRODUCTION

1. The Appellant submitted this Appeal against a decision (the **Decision**) taken by the Ground Jury on 22 November 2025 (the **GJ**) at the Competition 2 (Quarter Finals Team Competition) of the 2025 Global Champions Playoffs held in Prague (Czech Republic) on 20 November 2025 against his protest, lodged on 21 November 2025 (the **Protest**).

   ### Applicable Rule Provisions:

   Statutes 25th edition, effective 7 November 2025 (the **Statutes**), Art. 38.1.

   General Regulations 24th edition, updates effective 1 January 2025 (the **GRs**), Art. 161, Art. 162, Art. 165.

   FEI Jumping Rules, 27th edition, updates effective 1 January 2025 (the **Jumping Rules**), Art. 200.5, Art. 256.1.4

   Internal Regulations of the FEI Tribunal, 4th Edition, 1 February 2025 (the **IRs**), Art. 18, Art. 23, Art. 42-51.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

2. Mr Simon Delestre (FEI ID 10002790, the **Athlete**) is a French Jumping Rider, who competed with the horse Cayman Jolly Jumper (FEI ID 106MZ14, the **Horse**) in the 2025 Global Champions League season as a member of the Istanbul Warriors.

3. On 20 November 2025, the Athlete and the Horse competed at the Competition 2 – GCL Super Cup Quarter Final at the Global Champions Playoffs in Prague (Czech Republic; the **Event**). The Appellant completed a clear and penalty-free round.

4. Later on the same day, at approximately 22:15, the Appellant was summoned by the Officials of the Event, which informed him that his helmet retention harness had became unfastened at some time during his round.

5. Based on the above, the Ground Jury decided to retroactively eliminate the Appellant, pursuant to Article 256.1.4 of the 2025 FEI Jumping Rules. This elimination resulted in the Istanbul Warriors being allocated 40 penalties and no time, thereby placing them at the 12th position, and removing the team from further participation in the Playoffs.

6. The Appellant lodged a Protest to the GJ on 21 November 2025 at 00:32, and the GJ dismissed the Protest and confirmed the elimination on 22 November 2025 (18:20). The Appellant contested the Decision, since the judges on site did not observe any issue during his round, and the incident was only reported after the class had concluded, by a member of another team. Hence, the Decision was taken with retroactive effect, which is inconsistent with the established FEI officiating principles, as well as reliance on retroactive video review. Furthermore, the Appellant considered the Decision to have a disproportionate impact on the team.

7. In his decision dated 22 November 2025, the GJ rejected unanimously the Protest on the basis of Article 256.1.4 of the Jumping Rules.

8. On 5 December 2025, the Appellant lodged an Appeal with the FEI Tribunal against the Decision of the GJ rejecting his Protest.

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

9. On 5 December 2025, the Appellant submitted an Appeal to the FEI Tribunal contesting the Decision issued by the Ground Jury (GJ) rejecting his Protest. The Appellant requested the FEI Tribunal to set aside the Decision, annul the elimination based on Article 256.1.4 of the Jumping Rules and determine that no rule violation occurred that would justify the elimination, further ordering the FEI and/or the relevant Event Organizer to amend all official results, standings, rankings and related publications so as to reinstate the original results of the Appellant and the Istanbul Warriors team.

10. On 19 December 2025, the FEI Tribunal Chair (the "Chair") acknowledged receipt of the Appeal. The Chair notified the Parties of the nomination of a Sole Panel Member and advised them of their right to object. The FEI, as Respondent, was given until 26 January 2026 to file their Answer pursuant to Article 46.1 of the IRs, in conjunction with Article 25.4 of the IRs (calculation of deadlines and FEI Offices' closing from 20 December to 5 January). The Chair also provided the parties with a deadline to indicate whether they requested an oral hearing in the present matter.

11. On 19 December 2025, the FEI notified the Tribunal that it had no objection to the constitution of the Panel for this case.

12. The Appellant did not object to the constitution of the Panel for this case.

13. On 14 January 2026, the FEI submitted its Answer to the Appeal. In accordance with Article 46.2 of the IRs, the FEI limited its Answer to the issues of jurisdiction and admissibility and requested the Tribunal to decide on those issues before considering any others, in accordance with Article 23.1(a) of the IRs. The FEI argued the GJ Decision constitutes a "field of play" decision that is immune from protest and appeal.

14. On 16 January 2026, the Sole Panel Member acknowledged receipt of the FEI's correspondence of 14 January 2026. After considering the Parties' submissions, the Sole Panel Member decided, under Article 23.1(a) and Article 46.2 of the IRs, to first address the dispositive issues of Panel jurisdiction and the admissibility of the Appeal. The Appellant was given until 26 January 2026 to provide any additional position, strictly limited to jurisdiction and admissibility of the Appeal. The FEI will thereafter be entitled to supplement their Reply, within 7 days following receipt of the Appellant's submission. Finally, the Sole Panel Member requested the Parties to indicate in their respective submissions whether they requested a hearing in relation to the matter of admissibility, failing which the right for an oral submission would be deemed as waived.

15. On 23 January 2026, the Appellant requested a short extension of one week to file his response, indicating that the FEI had indicated having no objection to said request.

16. On 26 January 2026, the FEI Tribunal Clerk, on behalf of the Sole Panel Member, acknowledged receipt of the Appellant's email of 23 January 2026. The Appellant was informed that, unless the FEI opposed by return of email, the Appellant's request was granted by the Sole Panel Member. The new deadline thus elapsed on 2 February 2026, and the deadline to the FEI remained applicable, i.e. 7-days after receipt of the Appellant's submission.

17. On 2 February 2026, the Appellant submitted his additional position, as requested by the Sole Panel Member.

18. On 3 February 2026, the FEI Tribunal Clerk clarified that the FEI's position to respond would therefore elapse on 9 February 2026.

19. On 9 February 2026, the FEI submitted their reply to the Appellant's submission of 2 February 2026.

20. On 11 February 2026, the Sole Panel Member acknowledge receipt of the Parties' second round of written submissions on jurisdiction and admissibility of the Appeal. For the sake of good order, the Sole Panel Member asked the Appellant to confirm whether he maintained his request for an oral hearing submitted as part of his Appeal.

21. On the same day, the FEI indicated that it disagreed with the Sole Panel Member's latest letter, since it had been indicated, in the Tribunal's letter of 2 February 2026, that should the parties not request a hearing in their additional submissions, the right for an oral hearing would be deemed as waived. Therefore, the FEI was of the opinion that the Appellant's right for an oral hearing should be deemed as waived.

22. On 13 February 2026, the Appellant confirmed that he did not request for a separate oral hearing limited to the issue of admissibility, but maintained his request for an oral hearing in relation to the merits of the Appeal, should the Tribunal confirm its jurisdiction and declare the Appeal admissible.

THE PARTIES' SUBMISSIONS

23. Below is a summary of the relevant facts, allegations and arguments based on the Parties' written submissions and documentary evidence submitted during these proceedings, as well as orally during the hearing. Although the Tribunal has fully considered all the facts, allegations, legal arguments and evidence, the Tribunal will only refer to the submissions and evidence it considers necessary to explain its reasoning in this decision. In particular, the Appellant's arguments, ad far as they pertain to the merits of the case, will not be addressed in the present decision, which is limited to the admissibility of the Appeal.

Submissions by and on behalf of the Appellant

24. The Appellant submitted the following in his written submissions:

    (i) The Appellant appeals the GJ Decision issued on 22 November 2025 in the context of the Competition 2 – GCL Super Cup Quarter-Final at the Global Champions Playoffs in Prague.

    (ii) At the occasion of this Event, the Appellant competed his round with his Horse, round which was ended without any intervention from the GJ. It was only at a later stage that the GJ convened the Appellant, and explained to him that, due to

information received after the class, it had conducted an ex post video review, and concluded that the Appellant would be retroactively eliminated, due to a violation of Article 256.1.4 of the Jumping Rules. Said article provides as follows: *It is compulsory for all persons to wear a properly fastened Protective Headgear at all times when mounted. If an Athlete chooses to remove their Headgear at any time, whether permitted or not by these rules, such removal shall always be entirely at their own risk. An Athlete who loses their Headgear or whose retention harness becomes unfastened during the course of their round must recover and replace it, or in the case of the retention harness becoming unfastened must refasten it. In such case, the Athlete will not be penalised for halting to retrieve their Headgear and/or refasten the retention harness, but the clock will not be stopped. An Athlete who jumps or attempts to jump an obstacle with a retention harness incorrectly fastened or not fastened will be eliminated unless the circumstances rendered it unsafe for the Athlete to stop immediately in order to refasten the harness (e.g. if the harness becomes unfastened in the middle of a combination or one or two strides before the obstacle in question). As an exception to this rule Senior Athletes may remove their Headgear while accepting prizes, during the playing of the National anthem and any other ceremonial protocol.*

(iii) Pursuant to Article 11 of the 2025 GCL Rules, the retroactive elimination resulted in the Istanbul Warriors being allocated 40 penalties and no time, thereby placing them at the 12th position and removing the team from further participation in the Playoffs.

(iv) The Appellant lodged a protest on site against the GJ decision. While the protest was rejected by the GJ on site, the Appellant considers that it is firmly unfair, as shown also by international equestrian media, which widely criticized the GJ Decision.

(v) The Appellant is an experienced international Jumping rider, regularly competing at CSI5* level. At the Event, he competed alongside his teammates, Mr Henrik von Eckermann (SWE), and Mr Abdel Said (BEL).

(vi) The Appellant completed his round without any intervention from the GJ. No official indicated any irregularity with his equipment, no whistle was blown, and neither the Appellant nor his connections were made aware of any alleged issue with his helmet while he was on the field of play or immediately thereafter. After the Appellant's round, two additional teams completed their rounds.

(vii) After the class had fully finished, the results were processed and published. It is only at 22:15, i.e. after the class had ended and the results were published, that the Appellant was summoned by the GJ, who had conducted an ex-post video review.

(viii) No official had observed any irregularity on site, and it is only based on the video received that the GJ determined that the Appellant's retention harness had become unfastened.

(ix) The Appellant explained that he had not felt any malfunction of the harness at any moment. He completed the final sequence of fences 10A – 10B – 11 – 12, a phase requiring speed, balance, precision and uninterrupted momentum, without detecting any change in stability or equipment.

(x) The Appellant considers that the Decision is erroneous in fact and in law, as it violates the FEI's own regulatory framework and fundamental principles of fair play. It is also grossly disproportionate in light of an unintentional equipment failure that was neither observed nor sanctioned in the field of play.

(xi) With respect to the admissibility of the Appeal, and more specifically of the Second Video, the Appellant submitted that the Tribunal is competent in application of Article 162 of the GRs, which provides that *An Appeal may be lodged by any person or body with a legitimate interest against any Decision made by any person or body authorised under the Statutes, GRs or Sport Rules, provided it is admissible.* None of the grounds of inadmissibility exhaustively listed in the GRs are met.

(xii) The Decision is not a real-time sporting judgment made on the field of play. It is a retroactive elimination imposed after the competition had fully concluded, after the official results had been published, and following an ex-post video triggered by information received from outside the field of play. No FEI Official observed any irregularity during the Appellant's round, no safety intervention occurred, and the competition proceeded normally.

(xiii) The Decision is neither based on a factual observation of performance during the competition nor does it concern any of the enumerated examples of field-of-play determinations. The conduct of the GJ itself confirms it, since the Protest was not declared inadmissible. The GJ dismissed the Protest on the merits, relying on specific provisions of the Jumping Rules and the GRs. In particular, the GJ Decision does not mention Article 161.2 of the GRs.

(xiv) If one were to accept the FEI's admissibility objection, it would create an impermissible gap in legal protection and allow retroactive eliminations of decisive sporting consequence imposed outside the competition and without real-time observations, to escape any form of judicial scrutiny.

(xv) The FEI Tribunal has jurisdiction to hear and determine the Appeal, pursuant to Article 38.1 of the Statutes and Articles 161-162 of the GRs.

(xvi) The Decision under appeal was issued by the GJ, an FEI-recognized body within the meaning of Article 161-162 of the GRs.

(xvii) The Decision is administrative and disciplinary in nature and therefore fully reviewable in principle. All the other prerequisites (deadline, standing and legitimate interest, appeal fee) have been met.

(xviii) Further, the Tribunal has already registered the case under reference number A25-0003 and appointed a Panel member, confirming that the procedural prerequisites for the Tribunal to be seized of the matter have been satisfied.

(xix) Articles 161.2 of the GRs describes a narrow category of decisions "arising from the field of play" that are final and binding, and provides non-exhaustive examples, all of which are classic real-time determinations based on officials' factual observations of performance during a competition (e.g. knockdowns, refusals, falls, time, track followed).

(xx) Articles 161.17 of the GRs, and 200.5 of the Jumping Rules, expressly allow the use of video to assist FEI Officials and alter an outcome after the results have been communicated, but only within defined conditions, such as the fact that the video contains irrefutable evidence that the original ruling was incorrect.

(xxi) The FEI based its argument on the above provisions, which is incompatible with the FEI's position that all such outcome-altering determinations are immune from review as "field of play" decisions. If the FEI rules explicitly regulate and limit the conditions under which a Ground Jury may use video to alter an outcome after results have been communicated, it follows that such decisions are not automatically insulated from scrutiny by being labelled "field of play". They are rule-governed decisions with explicit preconditions.

(xxii) The FEI cannot simultaneously (a) invoke specific provisions that govern post-communication outcome changes by video (Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules and Article 161.17 of the GRs) and (b) argue that any resulting decision is categorically non-reviewable under Article 161.2 of the GRs, regardless of whether those governing provisions were respected. These provisions would be deprived of any practical effect if decisions taken under them were automatically immune from appeal under Article 161.2 of the GRs.

(xxiii) The same is true for Article 241.1 of the Jumping Rules, upon which the FEI relies. The existence of a rule permitting retroactive elimination does not answer the admissibility question; it simply establishes that retroactivity may be permitted in principle, subject to compliance with the governing rules and procedures.

(xxiv) The Decision Is not a non-appealable and non-reviewable "field of play" decision in the sense of Article 161.2 (a) of the GRs and is therefore appealable by way of Article 161.19 of the GRs.

(xxv) The decisions immune from appeal are mentioned in Article 161.2 of the GRs, and the Decision does not fall within said article, for four reasons:

(i) The Decision was not a "decision arising from the field of play" based on a contemporaneous factual observation during the competition. The GJ did not intervene during the competition but imposed the elimination only after the class had concluded, after the results had been published and after an ex-post video review from outside the field of play.
(ii) The Decision is qualitatively different from the examples listed in Article 161.2 of the GRs, as it concerns a post-competition reassessment of an alleged equipment irregularity.
(iii) The categories mentioned in Article 161.2 (b-d) of the GRs are irrelevant as they concern categories completely distinct from the Decision.
(iv) The GJ's own conduct confirms that the matter was not treated as a non-protestable Article 161.2 issue. The GJ did not declare the Protest inadmissible. Instead, it examined it and dismissed it on the merits. The Decision does not cite Article 161.2 of the GRs nor indicated that the Protest was inadmissible. This is a compelling indicator that the GJ itself did not consider the Decision to fall under Article 161 of the GRs.

(xxvi) If a decision falls within Article 161.2 of the GRs, then there is "no Protest", and hence, the GJ should reject the Protest, as inadmissible, which the GJ did not do in the present case. The FEI cannot, retroactively, reclassify the Decision as "non-appealable". This Is further evidenced by Articles 161.11 and 161.14 of the GRs, which govern the manner in which a Ground Jury must deal with a Protest, in particular when it considers not having jurisdiction. If the GJ considers that it lacks jurisdiction, it must not proceed to consider or comments on the merits. In the present case, the GJ did not render a separate decision on jurisdiction, nor did it declare the Protest inadmissible. Instead, it proceeded to examine the Protest, consider the applicable rules and evidence, hear the parties, and ultimately dismiss the Protest on the merits.

(xxvii) In view of the above, the Appellant respectfully requests the FEI Tribunal to confirm that it has jurisdiction to hear this Appeal and to declare the Appeal admissible, so that the matter may proceed to a determination on the merits in accordance with the FEI Statutes, the GRs and the fundamental principles of procedural fairness and legal certainty.

Submissions by and on behalf of the FEI

25. The FEI submitted the following in their written and oral submissions:

(i) The FEI limited their Answer to the question of jurisdiction and admissibility of the Appeal, in accordance with Article 46.2 of the IRs, and therefore requested the Tribunal to first rule on its jurisdiction and on the admissibility of the Appeal, in accordance with Art. 23.1 (a) of the IRs.

(ii) The Decision by the GJ to eliminate the Appellant as he continued to jump the course with unfastened headgear is a textbook "field of play" decision. In consequence, the Appeal at hand is an appeal against a "field of play" decision.

(iii) According to Article 162.2 GRs, there is no appeal against decisions of the GJ arising from the field of play, which are final and binding. Furthermore, as stated in Article 161.19, decisions covered by Article 161.2 are final and may not be appealed to the FEI Tribunal.

(iv) While there is a right to appeal certain decisions of the GJ, according to Art 161.19 GRs, this rule also notably states that "Decisions covered by Article 161.2 are final and may not be appealed to the FEI Tribunal." This Appeal concerns such a Decision.

(v) If "field of play" decisions, are stated in the FEI Rules and Regulations to be immune from Protest, it must follow that such category of decisions is also immune from appeal.

(vi) The "field of play" doctrine is firmly established not only in CAS jurisprudence but is also enshrined in the GRs, and has been confirmed in recent FEI Tribunal decisions (not. FEI Tribunal decisions A25-0001 SUI NF v. FEI, and A23-0005 ESP NF v. FEI). Article 161.2 of the GR clearly states that the decisions made by the GJ arising from the field of play are final and binding and not subject to appeal. This principle is further affirmed by Article 162.2 of the GR.

(vii) In the case at hand, the GJ is the referee. It is not for the FEI Tribunal to put itself in the shoes of the GJ and decide if the Appellant's protective headgear retention harness was unfastened during this round and if his elimination was warranted pursuant to Article 241.3.28 and 256 of the JRs.

(viii) It is irrelevant for the purpose of this Appeal whether the decision taken by the GJ was correct or not. Elimination may be retroactive, as clearly stated in Article 241.1 of the Jumping Rules.

(ix) In addition, the FEI Rules are crystal clear that FEI Officials may use video recordings to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities under FEI Rules & Regulations as stated in article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules.

(x) CAS jurisprudence is also clear that even if an Official would merely make an error of judgment (which is not the case here) it would not render a "field of play" decision invalid. Courts may interfere only if an Official's field of play decision is tainted by fraud, arbitrariness or corruption, otherwise the Court will abstain as a matter of policy from exercising it.

(xi) The "field of play" definition concerns the nature of the Decision, and not the timing. The fact that the elimination was retroactive does not strip it of its "Field of Play" status. The rule of Article 241.1 of the Jumping Rules exists precisely to allow FEI Officials to enforce field of play rules that are discovered after the athlete has crossed the finish line. Many FEI Officials' decisions pertaining to matters occurring in the field of play are actually taken after the athlete's round. For example, blood on a horse is assessed at the boot and bandage control that can take place both pre and post

competition according to the Boot & Bandage Protocol. If blood is discovered post competition during such Boot & Bandage Protocol, the athlete/horse combination is then eliminated retroactively, regardless of whether the FEI Officials noticed blood during the round.

(xii) The Decision is a "factual observation of performance during a Competition", pursuant to Article 161.2 (a) of the GRs, as it pertains to deciding whether the Athlete attempted to jump an obstacle with a retention harness unfastened.

(xiii) If the Appellant's logic was accepted, any retroactive elimination explicitly authorized by Article 241.1 would automatically become appealable, rendering the "Field of Play" doctrine void for any violation spotted on video review.

(xiv) The list provided for under Article 161.2 of the GRs is illustrative, and not exhaustive, based on its wording "such as, but not limited to". A decision regarding an unfastened helmet is legally indistinguishable from a decision regarding a refusal or a knockdown; it is a factual determination by the Ground Jury regarding the execution of the round. A safety violation occurring "during the course of their round" is a factual observation of performance.

(xv) A video review, pursuant to Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules, does not create a right of appeal. It is not a rule-governed decision which would be distinct from a referee's discretion. The video is a tool, not a loophole. While Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules allows for the use of video, it does not create a separate category of "video decisions" which would be exempt from the "field of play" doctrine.

(xvi) The judgment, whether the video evidence constitutes "irrefutable evidence" under Article 161.17 of the GRs, relies solely on the GJ. The GJ, after having made use of Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules to correct the results based on video evidence, made that factual determination, which became a final "field of play" decision, under Article 161.2 of the GRs.

(xvii) The GJ reviewed the video evidence to ensure their original decision (or lack thereof, prior to the retroactive call) was correct. Whether they label their decision as "dismissing the protest" or "confirming the elimination," the result is a confirmation of a factual occurrence on the field. Even if the GJ entertained the Protest, Article 161.19 of the GRs explicitly states: *"Decisions of the Ground Jury arising from a Protest may be appealed... [however] Decisions covered by Article 161.2 are final and may not be*

appealed to the FEI Tribunal". The GJ cannot waive the FEI Rules. Since the subject matter (unfastened headgear) is a factual observation of performance (Art 161.2), the FEI Tribunal is barred from hearing the appeal by Article 162.2(a) of the GRs regardless of how the GJ administratively handled the on-site protest.

(xviii) The registration of a case and the assignment of a reference number (A25-0003) are purely administrative acts performed by the FEI Tribunal registry to identify and track the file. This clerical step is necessary to initiate any proceeding but does not constitute legal confirmation that the rigid requirements of jurisdiction or admissibility under Article 162 of the General Regulations (GRs) have been met. Otherwise, the whole purpose of Article 46.2 of the IRs would be redundant and meaningless.

(xix) The appointment of a Panel is a prerequisite for the Decision, but not the Decision itself. A Panel must be appointed before it can make any ruling, including a ruling on its own jurisdiction. Said ruling is precisely what the Panel can do after having been appointed, pursuant to Article 23.1 (a) of the IRs.

(xx) The Tribunal being "seized" of a matter simply means the file has been formally placed before it. It does not mean that the Appeal is being declared "Admissible" under the General Regulations.

(xxi) The FEI therefore requests the Tribunal to consider the Appeal inadmissible, and order each party to be responsible for their own costs.

LEGAL DISCUSSION

26. As a preliminary matter, the Tribunal stresses its authority to address and decide on its own jurisdiction before addressing the merits of any case. Article 23.1(a) of the Internal Regulations (IRs) empowers the Tribunal, either upon a party's request or on its own initiative, to determine key dispositive issues in advance of all others. Accordingly, the Tribunal is not bound to wait for the parties' agreement before hearing questions of jurisdiction.

27. Further, pursuant to Article 23.1 (b) of the IRs, the Tribunal may *rule (subject only to any right of appeal to CAS) on its own jurisdiction to hear and determine proceedings brought before it either in a Preliminary Decision or in the Decision on the merits. When an objection to FEI Tribunal jurisdiction is raised, the Hearing Panel shall invite the opposing Party (Parties) to file written submissions on the matter of the FEI Tribunal's jurisdiction*.

28. Thus, as a preliminary issue, the Panel must determine its own jurisdiction—specifically, whether the subject of the current appeal is eligible for Tribunal review. This depends on whether the GJ Decision being appealed is considered a "Field of Play" decision under the FEI GRs; and, if so, whether any exceptional circumstances—such as arbitrariness or fraud—would justify overriding the finality of a Field of Play ruling.

29. Pursuant to Art. 162.2 (a) of the FEI GRs, *An Appeal is not admissible against Decisions by the Ground Jury in cases covered by Article 161.2*. Art. 161.2 of the GRs states the following: *There is no Protest against (a) Decisions of the Ground Jury arising from the field of play, which are final and binding, such as, but not limited to: (i) where the Decision is based on a factual observation of performance during a Competition or the awarding of marks for performance; (ii) whether an obstacle was knocked down; whether a Horse was disobedient; whether a Horse refused at an obstacle or knocked it down while jumping; (iii) whether an Athlete or Horse has fallen; (iv) whether a Horse circled in a combination or refused to ran out; (v) the time taken for the round; (vi) whether an obstacle was jumped within the time and/or whether, the particular track followed by an Athlete caused the Athlete to incur a penalty under the applicable Sport Rules (b) The Elimination or Disqualification of a Horse for veterinary reasons, including non-acceptance of a Horse at a Horse Inspection unless otherwise specified*.

30. The "Field of Play" doctrine is well-established and settled as a cornerstone principle of sports and CAS case law: "*According to the field of play principle, if a decision is demonstrated to be a "decision made on the playing field by judges, referees, umpires and other officials, who are responsible for applying the rules of a particular game," (CAS 2021/A/8119), the same should not be reviewed by the Panel. This wise principle seeks to avoid a situation in which arbitrators are asked to substitute their judgment for that of a judge, referee, umpire or other official, on a decision taken in the course of a competition that relates to a sporting activity governed by the rules of a particular game*" (CAS OG 24-15 & CAS OG 24-16, Award of 14 August 2024, par. 105).

31. This same principle was again confirmed by the Swiss Federal Tribunal in a Decision of 23 January 2026, under reference 4A_494/2024, consid. 4.2, which, quoting sports law doctrine, held that the lack of technical expertise of the sport from arbitrators, the need to avoid the competitions interruption and the necessity to limit the risk of having the legal field flooded by claims for results modifications, justify a strict application of this principle. This principle is not only for the athletes' interest, but also for the general public and the sports world (TF, Arrêt 4A_494/2024, 23 January 2026, consid. 4.4).

32. Indeed, and as mentioned in the CAS Award 2021/A/8119, "*The rationale for the "field of play" doctrine is that CAS Panels are not sufficiently trained in the rules of any or all sports and do not have the advantage to observe the event. All submissions by a party in relation to the judging and scoring of a competition are within the "field of play" doctrine and cannot be reviewed by a CAS Panel. Consequently, any challenge to the assessment of difficulty in a performance, assessment of artistry and execution – including the results of the performances – are all matters within the doctrine of "field of play". Any challenge on technical breaches in the athletes' performance are always matters requiring the expertise and judgment by those experts in the "field of play". If a video recording was a procedural aspect that led to the decision-making in the "field of play", its use is not open to review.*"

33. Upon assessing the case, including a ex-post video review, as specifically allowed by Article 161.17 of the GRs, and Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules, the GJ concluded that indeed, the Appellant's helmet had been unfastened at some point during his class (which, by the way, is a factual element not contested by the Appellant). In reaching this conclusion, the GJ issued a type of decision which is "*best left to field officials, who are specifically trained to officiate the particular sport and are best placed, being on-site, to settle any question relating to it*" (see CAS 2015/A/4208, para. 47), noting that there was unanimous agreement that the Athlete had to be retroactively eliminated and the team's result changed as per the 2025 Global Champions League rules Article 11. As highlighted by CAS in the cited reference, a strict application of the "Field of Play" doctrine is supported by several factors, including the inherent uncertainty of what might have occurred had an alternative decision been made, the absence of technical expertise on the part of arbitrators, the unavoidable subjectivity, the need to prevent frequent interruptions of competitions, the risk of opening the floodgates to further disputes, and the challenges of altering records and results retrospectively (CAS 2015/A/4208, para. 47). Overall, it is widely accepted that such determinations are best left to on-site field officials who possess the specific expertise required to officiate the sport and are in the optimal position to resolve any related questions (CAS 2015/A/4208, para. 47 and referenced authorities).

34. In considering whether the GJ Decision constitutes a "Field of Play" decision, the Sole Panel Member is of the view that the determination whether the Athlete's helmet was unfastened at some point during his class is unequivocally a "Field of Play" decision. This finding was made on site – although not directly during the class, as it will be further discussed below – by the FEI Officials, namely the GJ, exercising their prerogative in real time, and was directly linked to the competition, as the decision was required in response to circumstances that arose during the field of play.

35. The fact that the GJ decided on the matter after the class, and after the results were published, does not render it an outside the field of play decision. Quite to the contrary, both Articles 200.5 of the Jumping Rules, and 161.17 of the GRs, specifically allow for the use of video to assist the FEI Officials in carrying out their responsibilities, which is to be understood, in the present matter, as taking decisions related to the field of play. More precisely, Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules state that *Competitions must be fair for all Athletes. To achieve this objective, the use of all technical assistance available including but not limited to official video recordings is permitted to assist FEI Officials in carrying out their responsibilities under FEI Rules & Regulations. For official video recordings to be accepted under the FEI Rules & Regulations, they must be presented to the President of the Ground Jury within 30 minutes after the official results are announced.* [...] *A review of the video recording is solely at the discretion of the President of the Ground Jury. If the Ground Jury relies on video evidence to alter the outcome of any Competition after the results have been communicated, such a video recording must contain irrefutable evidence that the original ruling or decision was incorrect.*

36. In the present matter, it is undisputed that the GJ was entitled to take a decision, based on video evidence, also after the Athlete had concluded his class.

37. The Sole Panel Member notes the Appellant's argument, when he states that it is undisputed that (i) the Appellant entered the arena with his helmet properly fastened, (ii) no Juge observed any irregularity during the round, (iii) no whistle, signal, or intervention occurred at any time, (iv) the Appellant completed the entire course without interruption, (v) the class continued with two further teams after his ride, (vi) the class was formally concluded and (vii) the results were published (see Appellant's Statement of Appeal, par. 5.8.2). The Appellant also acknowledges that the "Field of Play" doctrine exists to safeguard legal certainty, competitive integrity, and the flow of sport, and in that it also prevents, in principle, retroactive officiating except where expressly authorised by rule.

38. In the present matter, the Sole Panel Member notes that there is, indeed, a rule expressly providing for the possibility, for the GJ, to review the situation based on video evidence, provided said evidence was submitted within 30 minutes after the results were published, in accordance with Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules. The Appellant does not contest that the GJ was entitled to review his class based on video evidence submitted to it. In this sense, the Sole Panel Member is convinced that the Decision was, indeed, a "Field of Play" decision, taken by the GJ on site. It is irrelevant that the decision was taken after the Appellant concluded his class, after two further teams ended their round, and that no whistle, signal or intervention occurred at any time. The GJ was entitled to review the results, on the basis

of Article 200.5 of the Jumping Rules, also after the results were published.

39. The decision taken by the GJ was clearly a decision which related to facts which occurred in the field of play, and falls within the category of such, in application of Article 161.2 (a) of the GRs.

40. The Sole Panel Member further notes the additional argument raised by the Appellant, by means of which the GJ on site did not declare his Protest inadmissible, but rejected it on the merits, which should warrant for his Appeal to be declared admissible as well. In this respect, the Sole Panel Member agrees that it is rather unfortunate that the GJ Decision did not elaborate on that aspect, and it is true that it could have mentioned that the Protest was not admissible since it contested a "Field of Play" decision. However, this sole fact does not allow for the Appeal to be declared admissible. Upon receipt of the Protest, the GJ reviewed again the video evidence, to ensure that their original decision was the correct one. As a result, the GJ confirmed it, in the sense that it confirmed the elimination of the Appellant, based on a factual occurrence which happened in the field. Ultimately, it is up to the Tribunal to determine whether the Decision is an appealable one, i.e. whether it is a "Field of Play" Decision. In the Sole Panel Member's view, it is clearly the case in the present matter.

41. With respect to the Appellant's argument that the FEI Tribunal registered the present matter under reference A25-0003, which would confirm that the Appeal was admissible, the Sole Panel Member cannot agree with such argument. As the FEI rightly pointed out in their submission, the registration of an appeal received is an administrative act, and not an analysis of admissibility. It is then up to the constituted Panel to determine whether the Appeal is admissible or not (and, in case of admissibility, whether it is well-founded or not). This situation is expressly provided for in the IRs, and in particular in Articles 23 and 46.2. Article 23.1 (a) mentions that it is up to the Hearing Panel to rule finally on its own jurisdiction. This is the principle, and it is only in urgent situations, that as an exception, it can be up to the FEI Tribunal Chair to rule on the admissibility. Furthermore, Article 46.2 of the IRs allows for the FEI, as Respondent, to limit its initial Answer to the question of jurisdiction and admissibility, in advance of any other issues in the Appeal. In application of the same article, the deadline for the FEI to submit its position on the merits is then stayed automatically until the Hearing Panel has issued a Decision on jurisdiction or admissibility. Hence, it follows clearly from those two provisions that the fact that a Panel was constituted in this case did not mean that the Appeal was admissible, and it is in fact the role of the Sole Panel Member to rule on the Tribunal's jurisdiction, which is done by the present decision.

42. In view of the foregoing, the Sole Panel Member determines that the Ground Jury's rejection of the Appellant's Protest constitutes a "Field of Play" decision under the GRs, and is therefore not subject to appeal. The Panel's role is not to adjudicate the merits but rather to address the purely procedural issue of the Tribunal's jurisdiction. Article 161.2 of the GRs expressly states that decisions of the Ground Jury arising from the field of play are not open to appeal and are final and binding. Even though the current scenario is not specifically enumerated in Article 161.2 of the GRs, the wording of the provision makes it clear that such decisions are "not limited to" the listed examples. In the Sole Panel Member's assessment (see FEI Tribunal Decision A23-0005 ESP-NF v. FEI, 8 January 2024, para. 27; FEI Tribunal Decision A25-0001 SUI-NF v. FEI, 20 November 2025, para. 46), this demonstrates that the list is illustrative, not exhaustive. What is ultimately decisive is whether the Ground Jury's decision pertains to the field of play—if so, it is non-appealable and carries final and binding effect.

43. It follows that, while the Decision under appeal is indeed not listed in Art. 161.2 of the GRs, it is nonetheless a clear "Field of Play" decision and therefore is also not appealable in front of the Tribunal.

44. The non-appealable nature of the Field of Play decision is further restated by Art. 162.2 of the GRs, which provides that an appeal is not admissible against decisions of the Ground Jury in cases covered by Art. 161.2 of the GRs, i.e. Field of Play decisions.

45. Accordingly, the Tribunal is therefore not able to hear the present matter. The Appeal will therefore be declared inadmissible, and the Appellant will be required to pay the proceeding costs, which will be reduced to CHF 500.- considering the matter, and which will be satisfied by the deposit paid by the Appellant. All other prayers for relief are dismissed.

DECISION

46. The Tribunal decides as follows:

    1. The Appeal is not admissible.
    2. All other requests are dismissed.
    3. No Deposit shall be returned to the Appellant.
    4. Each party shall pay their own costs in these proceedings.

47. According to Article 165 of the GRs, this decision is effective from the date of oral or written notification to the affected Party or Parties.

48. According to Articles 162.1 and 162.7 of the GRs, this decision may be appealed before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) within twenty-one (21) days of the present notification.

DECISION TO BE FORWARDED TO:

a. The Parties: Yes
b. Any other: No

FOR THE TRIBUNAL

Mr Agustin Fattal Jaef (ARG), Sole Panel Member