

**IN THE MATTER OF PROCEEDINGS BROUGHT BY THE INTERNATIONAL TENNIS
INTEGRITY AGENCY UNDER THE TENNIS ANTI-DOPING PROGRAMME 2025**

Before:

His Honour Phillip Sycamore CBE (Chair)

Professor Isla Mackenzie

Dr Abigail Gauci

BETWEEN:

THE INTERNATIONAL TENNIS INTEGRITY AGENCY

Anti-Doping Organisation

– and –

PARIKSHIT SOMANI

Respondent

DECISION OF THE INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL

A. INTRODUCTION

1. The International Tennis Integrity Agency (“**ITIA**”) is the independent body established by the International Tennis Federation (“**ITF**”), the global governing body for the sport of tennis, which is a signatory to the World Anti-Doping Code (“the **Code**”) and a delegated enforcement body under the Code. The ITIA investigates possible violations of the Tennis Anti-Doping Programme (“**TADP**”), which in this case is the 2025 version, and, where appropriate, brings charges before an Independent Tribunal.
2. Mr Parikshit Somani (“the **Respondent**”) is a 24-year-old professional tennis player of Indian nationality, with a career-high doubles ranking of 256 on the Association of Tennis

Professionals (“**ATP**”) Tour. He began playing tennis at the age of six (6) and played his first professional event in 2017. He is subject to the TADP.

B. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

3. On 27 July 2025, the Respondent arrived in Astana, Kazakhstan, to compete in the ATP Challenger event held there from 28 July to 3 August 2025 (“the **Event**”). On 30 July 2025, he and his doubles partner, Mr Woobin Shin, played and won their first match of the Event in straight sets. The following day, on 31 July 2025, Mr Shin informed the Respondent that he was unable to play in the quarter-final match that day, bringing the Respondent’s participation in the Event to an end.
4. On 31 July 2025, the Respondent was selected for an In-Competition Doping Control. The Respondent provided a urine Sample (“the **Sample**”) which was divided into an A-Sample and a B-Sample.
5. The A-Sample was tested at the World Anti-Doping Agency (“**WADA**”) accredited laboratory in Montreal, Canada (“the **Montreal Laboratory**”). On 29 August 2025, the Montreal Laboratory issued an Adverse Analytical Finding (“**AAF**”), determining that the A-Sample contained Trimetazidine (“**TMZ**”). The AAF Report records that “[n]either lomerizine or its metabolite N-dealkylated lomerizine (M6) were detected in the sample.” TMZ is classified on the WADA Prohibited List as a Hormone and Metabolic Modulator, under S4.4.4, and is prohibited at all times. The TADP likewise identifies TMZ as a Prohibited Substance. The estimated concentration of TMZ in the Respondent’s Sample was 158.6 pg/mL.
6. On 23 September 2025, the ITIA notified the Respondent of a potential Anti-Doping Rule Violation (“**ADRV**”). The notification referred in error to the date of the Sample as 31



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August 2025 instead of 31 July 2025. On the same date, the ITIA imposed a Provisional Suspension upon the Respondent.

7. On 6 October 2025, the Respondent attended an interview with the ITIA. At that time, he asserted that he had not identified the source of the AAF. The Tribunal has seen and read the record of the interview.
8. On 7 October 2025, the Respondent provided a response to the 23 September 2025 notification by which he denied the asserted ADRV, requesting analysis of the B-Sample and indicating that it “*was not possible to admit an anti-doping rule violation pending the testing of [his] B-Sample.*” He indicated that he was “*completely dedicated and committed to clean sport and wholly support[s] the work of the ITIA in seeking to safeguard the integrity of the game.*”
9. On 23 October 2025, under the ITIA’s Player Support Programme, the Respondent sent five (5) medications and supplements for testing at the Sports Medicine Research and Testing Laboratory (“**SMRTL**”) in Utah, USA. The ITIA confirmed on 20 January 2026 that none of the medications and supplements tested positive for TMZ.
10. On 30 October 2025, the ITIA informed the Respondent that the B-Sample had been analysed at the Montreal Laboratory and that the analysis confirmed the findings reported for the A-Sample.
11. The ITIA notified the Respondent on 29 January 2026 that he had been charged with an ADRV under Articles 2.1 and/or 2.2 of the TADP on the basis that TMZ was found to be present in the urine Sample provided on 31 July 2025 (“the **Charge**”).
12. The Respondent provided a response to the Charge on 20 February 2026. In his response, he admitted the ADRV, given the strict liability of Article 2.1 TADP, but denied that he had intentionally or knowingly used TMZ or been reckless as to its ingestion. He went on to indicate that he had identified the source of his AAF, being medication his



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mother required to treat a serious condition. He asserted that his AAF was the result of inadvertent contamination due to his consumption of food handmade by his mother on surfaces where her medication was kept, after she handled her medication.

13. In support of his response the Respondent relied on a witness statement from himself, a witness statement from his mother, Mrs [REDACTED] Somani (“S1”), both dated 20 February 2026 and a report from Professor Pascal Kintz setting out the results of fingernail and toenail testing on the Respondent. Mrs Somani made a further witness statement on 26 June 2026 (“S2”).
14. In his witness statement, the Respondent indicated that he had learned that his mother took “[REDACTED]” a drug which contains TMZ as its main ingredient. He explained that although he knew of his mother’s medication, he was unaware of the ingredients of “[REDACTED]” until he began investigations following receipt of the SMRTL findings. He went on to say that his mother made hand-rolled protein balls to take with him to tournaments and that he believed that they must have been contaminated with TMZ.
15. His mother asserted that she had first been prescribed “[REDACTED]” in March 2023 and that her prescriptions were issued or renewed on 9 April 2025 and that she kept her medications in their strips, having removed them from their cardboard boxes, in a plastic box in the kitchen. It was after SMRTL had reported that none of the medications and supplements submitted by the Respondent contained TMZ that the Respondent began scrutinising all medications in the house and it was then that she and the Respondent became aware for the first time that “[REDACTED]” contained TMZ. She went on to describe her method of preparation of the protein balls and indicated that she had not herself taken precautions regarding her use of “[REDACTED]” to prevent the Respondent from becoming contaminated. She took the “[REDACTED]” after breakfast and dinner by swallowing the tablets with a glass of water and would not routinely wash her hands after taking the tablets or before preparing food for the Respondent. She used her hands to roll out the



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protein balls and they were kept on the same counter as her medication prior to her wrapping them.

16. In S2 Mrs Somani indicated that she was first prescribed '██████' in April 2025 (not March 2023 as indicated in S1). It was accepted that the reference to March 2023 was in error and that April 2025 was the first time '██████' was prescribed. Also, in S2 Mrs Somani asserted for the first time that when preparing the ingredients for the protein balls she often used a masala crusher (a pestle and mortar) to grind some of the ingredients. She went on to assert that on some occasions she has broken up the '██████' with the same masala crusher. She said that she could not recall if she washed the pestle and mortar after crushing her tablets.
17. The Respondent attended a second interview with the ITIA on 9 March 2026. He indicated that he had not previously considered that he could have been contaminated by his mother's medication, or anyone else's in the household, and he had not made checks within the household at the time leading up to the positive test. His mother had not travelled with him, and he had last been in proximity of her six (6) days before the test. He indicated that it was in April 2025 that his mother had first been prescribed '██████' and described how she stored the medications in a plastic box in the kitchen in their strips, having removed them from their cardboard boxes which she then discarded.
18. He explained that his mother took her medication with a glass of water. When asked if she ever crushed the medication or dissolved it in water or whether it was straight into the mouth and consumed with water, he replied: "[yes]. I mean I've never seen her crush it, but yes."
19. In answer to a question as to how he believed the contamination occurred, he said: "I believe it's a transfer from her hands because after she takes the medicines, she doesn't usually wash her hands and then she immediately gets back in the kitchen" and that "I believe it's either that or, sometimes when she has to get the glass of water, she'll just



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keep one of the tablets that she's taken on the slab and then she gets the glass and then she takes it from there."

20. On 30 March 2026, the ITIA informed the Respondent that it did not consider that he had discharged the burden on him to prove the source of his ADRV and did not consider that he had proved that his ADRV was not intentional and confirmed its proposed sanction of a four (4) year period of Ineligibility.

C. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL

21. The Player informed the ITIA on 7 April 2026 that he did not accept the proposed sanction and initially expressed a preference for the case to be heard directly by the Court of Arbitration for Sport ("**CAS**") Anti-Doping Division ("**ADD**"). The ITIA rejected that proposal, and a referral was made, with the Player's consent, to the Independent Panel, administered by Sport Resolutions which, on 11 May 2026, confirmed the appointment by Dr Tanja Haug, the Chair of the Independent Panel, of His Honour Phillip Sycamore CBE as Chair of the Independent Tribunal. Subsequently, on 11 June 2026, Dr Haug appointed Professor Isla Mackenzie and Dr Abigail Gauci as the remaining two members of the Independent Tribunal.
22. The Tribunal's jurisdiction arises under Article 8.1.1 of the TADP, pursuant to which charges and any issues relating to them are submitted to an Independent Tribunal for determination and, where an ADRV is established, the Tribunal determines the applicable Consequences in accordance with Articles 9 and 10. The Tribunal was constituted pursuant to Article 8.2.1 and, in accordance with Article 8.5.1, has jurisdiction to determine the Consequences of the ADRV admitted by the Respondent.
23. The proceedings are concerned solely with the issue of sanction. The Respondent maintains that: (i) the ADRV was unintentional; (ii) the presence of TMZ in his Sample



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was attributable to contamination; and (iii) he bears No Fault or Negligence for the ADRV such that the mandatory two (2) year sanction for an unintentional Article 2.1 ADRV is eliminated; (iv) alternatively, he bears No Significant Fault or Negligence for the ADRV, such that the period of Ineligibility should be eliminated and a reprimand imposed, or that any period of Ineligibility should be substantially reduced.

24. For its part the ITIA submits that the Respondent has failed to establish the source of the TMZ in the Sample and has therefore failed to rebut the presumption of intent under Article 2.1 of the TADP and that, accordingly, the mandatory sanction of a four (4) year period of Ineligibility applies.
25. The Tribunal must therefore consider whether the Respondent has established that his ADRV was not intentional. If, but only if, he so establishes, is the Tribunal then required to consider whether (a) he bears No Fault or Negligence for the ADRV; or (b) he bears No Significant Fault or Negligence for the ADRV. To succeed in rebutting the presumption of intent under Article 2.1 he must establish the source of the TMZ in the Sample. The burden rests on the Respondent on the balance of probabilities.
26. On 2 June 2026, the Chair issued procedural directions and in accordance with those directions the Respondent filed his brief on 26 June 2026 and the ITIA its brief on 24 July 2026.
27. The hearing took place on 19 August 2026 by remote videoconference. The ITIA was represented by Ms Louise Reilly SC and Mr David Baker, both of counsel and the Respondent was represented, pro bono, by Mr Tom Sprange KC, Ms Charity Kirby, Mr Liam Petch and Mr Jack Ledigo, all of counsel. Ms Freya Pock of Sport Resolutions provided administrative support. We express our gratitude to all of the legal representatives and to Ms Pock for their assistance.
28. The Tribunal had before it written witness evidence from the Respondent and Mrs Somani (2 statements), both of whom gave oral evidence. In addition, the Respondent provided



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character witness statements from Mr Francis Alcantra, Mr Dominik Palan and Mr Adil Kalyanpur. The ITIA provided a witness statement from Mr Matthew Perry, who also gave oral evidence at the hearing.

29. In addition, there were expert witness reports from Professor Jean-Francois Naud (ITIA's expert) and Professor Alberto Salamone (Respondent's expert), both of whom provided oral evidence. There was also an expert witness statement from Professor Pascal Kintz (Respondent's expert), who also provided oral evidence.

D. THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

30. Article 2 TADP provides:

*"Doping is defined as the occurrence of one or more of the following (each, an **Anti-Doping Rule Violation**):*

2.1 The presence of a Prohibited Substance or any of its Metabolites or Markers in a Player's Sample, unless the Player establishes that such presence is consistent with a TUE granted in accordance with Article 4.4.

2.1.1 *It is each Player's personal duty to ensure that no Prohibited Substance enters their body. Players are responsible for any Prohibited Substance or any of its Metabolites or Markers found to be present in their Samples. Accordingly, it is not necessary to demonstrate intent, Fault, Negligence, or knowing Use on the Player's part in order to establish an Article 2.1 Anti-Doping Rule Violation; nor is the Player's lack of intent, Fault, Negligence or knowledge a defence to an assertion that an Article 2.1 Anti-Doping Rule Violation has been committed."*



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31. Article 2.2 TADP provides:

“Use or Attempted Use by a Player of a Substance or a Prohibited Method, unless the Player establishes that such Use or Attempted Use is consistent with a TUE granted in accordance with Article 4.4.

2.2.1 *It is each Player’s personal duty to ensure that no Prohibited Substance enters their body and that no Prohibited Method is Used. Accordingly, it is not necessary to demonstrate intent, Fault, Negligence, or knowing Use on the Player’s part in order to establish an Anti-Doping Rule Violation for Use of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method under Article 2.2; nor is the Player’s lack of intent, Fault, Negligence or knowledge a defence to a charge that an Anti-Doping Rule Violation of Use has been committed under Article 2.2.”*

32. Article 10.2.1 TADP provides:

“Save where Article 10.2.4.1 applies, the period of Ineligibility will be four years:

10.2.1.1 *where the Anti-Doping Rule-Violation does not involve a Specified Substance or a Specified Method, unless the Player or other Person establishes that the Anti-Doping Rule Violation was not intentional; [...]*”

33. Article 10.5 TADP provides:

“Elimination of the period of Ineligibility where there is No Fault or Negligence

If a Player or other Person establishes in an individual case that they bear No Fault or Negligence for the Anti-Doping Rule Violation, the otherwise applicable period of Ineligibility will be eliminated.”



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34. Article 10.6 provides:

“Reduction of the period of Ineligibility based on No Significant Fault or Negligence

10.6.1 *Reduction of Sanctions in particular circumstances for Anti-Doping Rule Violations under Article 2.1, 2.2 or 2.6:*

All reductions under Article 10.6.1 are mutually exclusive and not cumulative.

10.6.1.1 *Specified Substances or Specified Methods*

Where the Anti-Doping Rule Violation involves a Specified Substance (other than a Substance of Abuse) or Specified Method, and the Player or other Person can establish that they bear No Significant Fault or Negligence for the violation, the period of Ineligibility will be, at a minimum, a reprimand and no period of Ineligibility, and at a maximum, two years of ineligibility, depending on the Player’s or other Person’s degree of fault.”

35. No Fault or Negligence is defined in Appendix 1 of the TADP as follows:

“The Player or other Person establishing that they did not know or suspect, and could not reasonably have known or suspected even with the exercise of utmost caution, that they had Used or been administered the Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method or otherwise violated an anti-doping rule. Except in the case of a Protected Person or Recreational Athlete, for any violation of Article 2.1 the Player must also establish how the Prohibited Substance entered their system.”



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E. THE PARTIES' EVIDENCE

I. For the Respondent

The Respondent

36. Both the Respondent and his mother provided oral evidence at the hearing. They confirmed the contents of their witness statements.
37. The Respondent explained that he did not earn a living from tennis and that he relied on parental support. He lived with his parents when not travelling or away for tournaments, which could be for as much as 35 weeks a year. He acknowledged that he is subject to the TADP and that he is responsible for everything in his body. He routinely checked his own medications and supplements to ensure they did not contain any Prohibited Substances but acknowledged that he did not take similar steps in relation to his mother's medication, nor did he ask his mother to check, as he never thought it would affect him.
38. When asked about paragraph 20 of his witness statement he agreed that there was no mention of a masala crusher. He had not seen his mother use one nor had he seen his mother crush her tablets. He had not received any training from the ITIA in relation to the need to be alert to the medication taken by other family members.

Mrs ██████ Somani

39. Mrs Somani gave her evidence through an interpreter. She explained how she was very involved in the Respondent's tennis career and how she and her husband support him financially. She told The Tribunal that she takes ██████ different medications, ██████ of which contain Prohibited Substances "██████ (██████ and "██████ (██████ and that, on some occasions, they are sold without being packed in boxes.
40. She had never checked if the medications contained Prohibited Substances. The Respondent had never asked her to take precautions. She agreed that there had been no



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mention of a masala crusher in S1 and explained that she did not mention it as she was unaware of the link with TMZ. She did not use it every time, only when she was putting cardamom in the protein balls.

41. As to the method of ingestion of the medication she acknowledged that her doctor has indicated that he gave no oral instructions to her as to the method of taking her medication. She had never read the product information sheet provided with the [REDACTED] prescription, which she agreed contained the instruction “*do not crush*”. She agreed that there was no mention in S1 to her practice of, occasionally, if she had a throat problem, crushing the tablet, together with her other tablets. Her explanation for not mentioning this in S1 was that she had never considered that something in her medication was the cause of the problem for the Respondent. She had always thought until the Charge was brought that it was connected with the supplements he took.
42. Mrs Somani told the Tribunal that she used the same masala crusher for both the crushing of the tablets and the preparation of the protein balls. She could not recall if she washed the pestle and mortar after crushing. There was no need to wash them after use every time, as they were used for other spice mixing. She did not remember if she washed her hands after crushing her tablets. She did not recall if she had crushed her medication on the days she had prepared protein balls for the Respondent.

Professor Pascal Kintz

43. Professor Kintz provided a statement dated 6 February 2026, which the Tribunal has read carefully. His evidence was concerned with nail and hair test analysis. He provided oral evidence at the hearing. He explained that his laboratory, X-Pertise Consulting is accredited. He was provided with fingernail and toenail clippings from the Respondent and hair from Mrs Somani (the Respondent’s hair was too short for a sample to be provided). His conclusion was expressed as follows: “*[t]he results of the nail tests of Mr Parikshit Somani are consistent with incidental exposure to trimetazidine.*”



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44. He acknowledged that he had not produced any documentation as to the chain of custody of the samples provided, for example as to how they were collected and how and by whom they were sent to him. He explained that whilst he does not explain how samples are to be sent there are some general instructions on their website but acknowledged that the WADA collection processes are more accurate. He told us that in terms of the detection window for nail analysis, fingernails grow at a faster rate than toenails. He said that the window for detection in fingernails is 3 to 6 months up to 8 months, and 6 to 8 months up to 12 months for toenails. He did not produce or rely on any studies on the incorporation of TMZ in human nail clippings.

Professor Alberto Salomone

45. Professor Salomone is an Associate Professor in Analytical Chemistry and Forensic Toxicology at the University of Turin, Italy. He provided a report dated 25 June 2026 which the Tribunal has read carefully. He indicated that he had more than twenty years' experience in the analysis of doping agents.

46. His written report concluded:

"To summarize, it is my opinion that the ingestion of a therapeutic dose of TMZ can be excluded because of the analysis of Mr. Somani's nails. Instead, the results from Mr Somani's urine sample collected on 31st July 2025 is consistent with exposure to extremely low doses of TMZ. The exposure has likely occurred by eating contaminated food."

47. He expressed the opinion that drugs can be excreted in sweat and that sweat from the hands when rolling the protein balls could have caused the contamination but indicated no analysis had been undertaken of sweat and how the protein balls could have contained TMZ. For example, although there was no evidence from Mrs Somani as to how long she took to roll the protein balls, Professor Salomone suggested that it could have been as long as one (1) hour and that sweat would have accumulated and was the most likely



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source of contamination. In his written report (paragraph 44), he acknowledged that whilst there were no available specific studies for TMZ in sweat “*the reference literature allows us to speculate that unmodified TMZ is detectable in sweat to a certain level after the intake of therapeutic doses.*” He sought to introduce in his oral evidence the concept of “*sound speculation*”, a term he accepted was his own term.

48. When asked about the incorporation of TMZ in human nails, he agreed that there was no scientific literature on the topic. But notwithstanding that, professional skills could be used to draw conclusions. He accepted that it would have been helpful to have had nail samples from Mrs Somani as there are sometimes higher concentrations in nails.
49. Professor Salomone had opined in his written report that manual friction, temperature and humidity could degrade the pill coatings such that miniscule traces of the inner active drug can be more exposed to the external environment. He was reminded that Mrs Somani had explained that her routine was to pop the tablet out of the blister pack and then swallow it with water. He maintained that opinion notwithstanding the absence of any analysis of temperature/humidity or handling of the tablet that might be required in order to degrade the tablets. He did not accept that his theory was implausible because of the protective coating around the core of the active ingredient.
50. Professor Salomone advanced a third method of contamination, arising from the use of the pestle and mortar, opining that “*it is impossible to verify whether Mr. Somani’s mother had crushed her pills and then prepared in the same day and in the same manner the food for her son, it cannot be excluded that minimum amounts (in the ng or ug range) were present in the mortar and then passed from the mortar to the food. Again, the ingestion of such contaminated food is sufficient to produce a positive result for TMZ of 158.6 pg/mL in urine.*”
51. He summarised his written report by expressing the opinion that “[...] *it is my opinion that the ingestion of a therapeutic dose of TMZ can be excluded because of the analysis of Mr*



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Somani's nails. Instead, the results from Mr Somani's urine sample collected on 31 July 2025 is consistent with exposure to extremely low doses of TMZ. The exposure has likely occurred by eating contaminated food."

II. For the ITIA

Mr Matthew Perry

52. Matthew Perry is the Director of Education at the ITIA and made a witness statement on 14 August 2026. The Tribunal has read the statement. Mr Perry provided oral evidence and confirmed the accuracy of his statement. He explained that the focus of his role is on prevention and to support players. This is delivered through a series of media, including sessions and webinars. Advice and guidance are available to players, especially with regard to risk reduction and in particular in relation to the risks of medication, given the strict liability which applies. He explained that the key message is that it is for the player to check.
53. Mr Perry described the Tennis Integrity Protection Programme ("**TIPP**"), which he was able to confirm the Respondent had completed in 2022 (valid to 2024) and 2024 (valid to 2026). He added that the training includes talks about having relevant conversations with family but agreed that, whilst this did not go as far as specifically requiring players to check the medications of others in the same environment, there was a need to be alert to the risks of contamination from, for example, meat and medications.

Professor Jean-Francois Naud

54. Professor Naud, of the Doping Control Laboratory, Quebec, Canada, provided a report dated 23 July 2026, which the Tribunal has read. He provided oral evidence at the hearing. He acknowledged that he was not an expert in hair analysis but was familiar with the literature. He stressed how a proper chain of custody is essential in the collection and transmission of samples and was critical, for example of the process in this case, which



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involved collection of the samples by the athlete himself rather than by an agency and the arrangements for delivery of the samples to Professor Kintz. He did not suggest that this had resulted in any manipulation.

55. He indicated that the only conclusion he could draw from Professor Kintz's report was that Mrs Somani was taking TMZ.
56. Whilst he agreed that transmission through sweat was possible, he did consider it likely in this case as he would have expected to have also seen contamination from other drugs being taken by Mrs Somani.
57. He discounted the theory that contamination could have resulted from the handling of the drug, explaining how the structure of the tablet, with the medication placed in the centre of the tablet, designed to protect the medication as it passes through the stomach made this highly unlikely.
58. As to the pestle and mortar theory, he opined that this was the only theory that was possible, although highly unlikely given the instructions provided for ingestion of the tablet and the lack of any trace in the urine sample of any other drug being taken by Mrs Somani. Mrs Somani (see paragraph 38) was also taking "██████ (██████)
59. Despite suggestions that his approach was not consistent with his being an independent expert witness he maintained that, although he did not provide reports for athletes, there were reports commissioned by the ITIA and WADA in which he had provided opinions which favoured the athlete, providing the example of his role in the Sinner proceedings. He was not placed under any pressure to report one way or the other and that as an independent expert, he relied only on science, not his personal opinion. In the present case, he was provided with the accounts from the Respondent and Mrs Somani, together with Professor's Kintz's statement and Professor Salomone's report.



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F. DISCUSSION

60. The Independent Tribunal carefully considered all of the material contained in the hearing bundle (extending to some 3,237 pages) which included the parties' briefs and a significant number of authorities and articles. The Tribunal gave careful consideration to the closing submissions from counsel for both parties.
61. In considering the case the Tribunal had firmly in mind that proof of source, that is to say, how the Prohibited Substance entered the Respondent's system, is at the core of this case and that, applying CAS case law, the Respondent must do so by the provision of clear, cogent, persuasive or concrete evidence. Speculative evidence is insufficient to prove no intent. The burden is on the Respondent on the balance of probabilities.
62. The starting point for sanction is a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years. The Respondent has accepted the ADRV breach, and in order to establish the source of the Prohibited Substance in his system, he advances an explanation of a single source, namely food contamination. The Tribunal was reminded of the decision in *Gasquet* (17 December 2009) which established that the balance of probabilities is set at 51%, a principle which has been applied in a number of CAS cases. If a player is successful in establishing lack of intent, the period of Ineligibility is reduced to two (2) years with further reductions being possible only if No Fault or Negligence or No Significant Fault or Negligence is established.
63. Three (3) theories were advanced on behalf of the Respondent as set out in the summary of evidence above, namely the "***Pestle and Mortar Theory***"; the "***Sweat Theory***" and the "***Residue Theory***". The Respondent's case is specifically that the protein balls made by Mrs Somani were contaminated by TMZ.



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I. The Pestle and Mortar Theory

64. It was clear from the evidence presented to us that there has been a noticeable shift in the explanations offered by the Respondent and Mrs Somani. For example, in the judgment of the Tribunal there was no satisfactory explanation for the delay of almost five (5) months in advancing the food contamination theory, or in the Respondent's delay until the end of January 2026 in having his hair tested, by which time it was too late.
65. Similarly, the Tribunal considers the shift in Mrs Somani's position as to how she made the protein balls from what was said in S1, in February 2026, as against the account put forward in S2, in June 2026. In S1 Mrs Somani spoke only of taking a pill with water, compared with the very different account in S2 of sometimes using the masala crusher. This was in contradiction with what was said in S1, in which she said that she took the medication in accordance with her doctor's advice. Her doctor has subsequently clarified that he did not provide any advice, as acknowledged by Mrs Somani in her evidence at the hearing. It is the case that the product information sheet contained a specific instruction not to crush the tablet. This aspect of the evidence is important as, at face value, it offers a scientifically plausible route of contamination from the TMZ contained in the "██████████" tablets. It was of significance that the Respondent's Sample did not contain any trace of ██████████
66. The Tribunal considers that the basis advanced by the Respondent and Mrs Somani is highly questionable. The theory emerged quite some time after the Respondent and Mrs Somani had provided their evidence and explanations, and from a significant change in Mrs Somani's evidence for which, in the judgement of the Tribunal, no convincing or satisfactory explanation has been provided. As Professor Naud explained (see paragraph 56 above), it would have been expected that the Respondent may also have been contaminated with ██████████. The Respondent had no recollection of ever seeing Mrs Somani crushing tablets (see paragraphs 18 and 37 above).

67. The Tribunal consider the account for the Pestle and Mortar Theory to be unconvincing and, similarly, were unpersuaded by the explanations offered for the shift in Mrs Somani's evidence. It does not meet the burden of clear, cogent, concrete or persuasive evidence.

II. The Sweat Theory

68. Professor Salomone's theory is that the Respondent may have been contaminated through Mrs Somani's sweat coming into contact with the protein balls. He accepted (see paragraph 47 above) that the theory is speculative and unsupported by scientific literature. Although he made reference to a case study involving contamination with a Prohibited Substance, that involved very different circumstances to those in the present case. It involved the sharing by two individuals of a neoprene sleeve into which sweat had collected and pooled. For his part, Professor Naud considered the theory to be highly unlikely. Given that Professor Salomone acknowledged that the theory was speculative, albeit qualified by his concept of "*sound speculation*", and the assumptions he made, for example, that Mrs Somani could have taken as much as one (1) hour to prepare the protein balls (see paragraph 46 above) we are satisfied that the theory is highly speculative and falls considerably short of the required burden.

III. The Residue Theory

69. This theory advances the premise that the coating on the "██████" tablets degraded to such an extent that miniscule traces of the inner active drug became exposed to the external environment. Professor Salamone essentially advanced the theory that because of manual friction, temperature and humidity, the pill coatings can degrade to a point that miniscule traces of the inner active drug can be exposed.
70. In his oral evidence, Professor Salomone accepted that no analysis as to the temperature or humidity that would be required to degrade the tablets was carried out, nor was there any analysis of the temperature or humidity in Mrs Somani's apartment.



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71. Professor Naud explained the implausibility of this theory because of the protective coating around the active medication ingredient at the centre of the tablet. This is designed to ensure that the medication passes through the stomach before being absorbed in the large intestine. The Tribunal found his explanation as to why the exposure of TMZ from simple handling of the tablet would be highly unlikely to be convincing. Taking this with what we know about the way in which Mrs Somani stored and took her medication, in which there was no element of manual friction, the Tribunal concludes that the Residue Theory is scientifically implausible and does not meet the required burden of clear, cogent concrete or persuasive evidence.
72. It follows that the Tribunal is satisfied that the Respondent has failed to establish how the Prohibited Substance entered his system, and he is therefore unable to rely on a plea of No Fault or Negligence or No Significant Fault or Negligence.

G. DECISION

73. This is the unanimous decision of the Independent Tribunal:
- (1) Parikshit Somani has not established on the balance of probabilities that the ADRV was not intentional;
 - (2) The following questions, therefore, do not arise for determination:
 - (a) Whether Parikshit Somani bears No Fault or Negligence for the ADRV; or
 - (b) Whether Parikshit Somani bears No Significant Fault or Negligence for the ADRV.
 - (3) Parikshit Somani is found to have committed an Anti-Doping Rule Violation pursuant to Article 2.1 (Presence) and/or Article 2.2 (Use) of the International Tennis Integrity Agency's Tennis Anti-Doping Programme.



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- (4) Parikshit Somani is sanctioned with a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years starting on the date of this Decision, with the period of Provisional Suspension imposed from 23 September 2025 until the date of this Decision to be credited against the total period of Ineligibility to be served.
- (5) All competitive results obtained by Parikshit Somani (i) at the Event and (ii) until 23 September 2025 are Disqualified, with all resulting Consequences, including the forfeiture of any titles, awards, medals, points and prize and appearance money.

H. COSTS

- 74. The ITIA's Brief indicated that the ITIA reserved its rights to seek a contribution to its legal costs. The Tribunal directs that the ITIA shall by 16.00 hours on 23 September 2026 notify the Tribunal and the Respondent of its intentions in this regard.



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I. APPEAL

75. This decision may be appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport ("CAS"), located at Palais de Beaulieu, Avenue des Bergières 10, CH-1004 Lausanne, Switzerland (procedures@tas-cas.org), in accordance with Article 13.2.1 TADP. Article 13.8.1.1 TADP sets the deadline to file an appeal to the CAS, which is 21 days from the date of receipt of this Decision.



His Honour Phillip Sycamore CBE



Dr Abigail Gauci



Professor Isla Mackenzie

On behalf of the Independent Panel

London

9 September 2026

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