

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION  
DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

(on behalf of The Amateur FA ('AFA'))

Participants: Christopher Hobbs of Wandsworth Elite FC ('WEFC'), WEFC and Lewis Afflick of WEFC

Hearing: Personal Hearing

Date: 2 September 2021

Incident: WEFC v JB Rangers ('JBRFC'). 2 May 2021 ('the Fixture')

---

THE DECISION AND REASONS OF THE COMMISSION

---

### Disciplinary Commission

1. The following members were appointed to the Disciplinary Commission:
  - a. Mr Alan Darfi (Independent Chair appointed by The Football Association)
  - b. Ms Ellie Menezes (Independent Member appointed by The Football Association)
  - c. Ms Louise Dorling (Independent Member appointed by The Football Association)(the 'Commission')
2. The Commission was assisted by Mrs Debbie Sowton of HFA, who acted as Secretary.
3. The case was considered at a personal hearing. Due to Covid restrictions, the personal hearing took place virtually in accordance with FA Regulations.

### Charges

4. AFA received reports following the Fixture, alleging that Christopher Hobbs, WEFC and Lewis Afflick had engaged in Improper Conduct

#### *Christopher Hobbs*

5. In correspondence dated 16 August 2021, AFA issued a charge letter alleging that Mr Hobbs had engaged in Improper Conduct against a Match Official including abusive language/behaviour, in breach of FA Rule E3. Rule E3.1 states 'A Participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behavior' ('Hobbs Charge 1').
6. It was alleged that Mr Hobbs had used abusive and/or insulting words towards the Match Official by telling him to 'fuck off'.
7. Mr Hobbs denied Hobbs Charge 1, requesting the matter be considered at a personal hearing.

#### *WEFC*

8. In correspondence 16 August 2021, AFA issued a charge letter alleging that WEFC had acted in breach of FA Rule E20 during the Fixture. Rule E20 states that 'each Affiliated Association, Competition and Club shall be responsible for ensuring that its Directors, players officials employees, servants representatives, spectators, and all persons purporting to be its supporters or followers, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion and refrain from any one or combination of the following: improper conduct, violent, threatening, abusive indecent, insulting or provocative words or behavior, whilst attending at or taking part in a match in which it is involved, whether on its own ground or elsewhere'. ('WEFC Charge 1').
9. It was alleged that players and/or the manager swore at and were verbally aggressive towards the Match Official and as a consequence of this the Match Official abandoned the Fixture.
10. WEFC denied WEFC Charge 1, requesting the matter be dealt with at a personal Hearing.

#### *Lewis Afflick*

11. In correspondence dated 16 August 2021, AFA issued a charge letter alleging that Lewis Afflick had engaged in Improper Conduct against a Match Official including threatening

and/or abusive language/behaviour, in breach of FA Rule E3. Rule E3.1 states 'A Participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behavior' ('Afflick Charge 1').

12. It was alleged that Lewis Afflick had used threatening words towards the Match Official by saying 'if he saw me on the street he would cut [him] up' and that 'he knows where [he] works and that [he is] a bin man, when he sees [him] on the street he would cut [him] up'.
13. Lewis Afflick denied Afflick Charge 1, requesting the matter be considered at a personal hearing.
14. The Charges were all considered at a consolidated hearing in accordance with FA Regulations.

#### Evidence

15. The Commission received and reviewed the following documents:
  - a. AFA charge letters, dated 16 August 2021;
  - b. Evidence in support of the Charges; and
  - c. Response to the Charges.

#### Decision

16. The following is a summary of the principal submissions considered by the Commission. It does not purport to contain reference to all points considered, however the absence in these reasons of any particular point, or submission, should not imply that the Commission did not take such point, or submission, into consideration when the members determined the matter. For the avoidance of doubt, the Commission carefully considered all the evidence and materials furnished with regard to this case.
17. The burden of proof is on AFA. The applicable standard of proof is the balance of probability. The balance of probability standard means that the Commission is satisfied an event occurred if the Commission considers that, on the evidence, the occurrence of the event was more likely than not.
18. The Commission heard live evidence from Daniel Crump (referee), Mr Hobbs, Lewis Afflick, Curtis Afflick (WEFC player) and Craig Hill (WEFC manager).
19. Mr Crump stated that:
  - a. Throughout the Fixture he had a number of issues with dissent and other comments from WEFC. These comments included things such as that he didn't know the Laws of the Game and also that he was refereeing the Fixture inappropriately giving the fact that it was a friendly. Mr Crump also stated that one player had suggested he was a level 9 referee and knew that Mr Crump was not applying the Laws correctly.
  - b. As a result he had to send two WEFC players to the sin bin. The first incident had been when a player called him a 'jobsworth', with the second being when a player asked him to stop the game so he could do up his laces, then called him a 'jobsworth' when he would not.
  - c. In around the 54<sup>th</sup> minute of the Fixture Mr Hobbs (the WEFC manager) entered the field of play to query the second player being sent to the sin bin. Mr Crump confirmed he had been stood in the centre circle.

- d. He asked Mr Hobbs to leave three times and stated that he was already dealing with 6-7 players, but Mr Hobbs refused to do so each time. He then issued Mr Hobbs with a yellow card, in response to which Mr Hobbs told him to 'fuck off', therefore he issued him with a red card. Mr Hobbs had been stood about 3-4 yards away at the time and was looking directly at him.
- e. When questioned, Mr Crump confirmed that he had reported the yellow card shown to Mr Hobbs to the AFA, with it being suggested that this was not showing on the Whole Game System.
- f. Several WEFC players were also abusive towards him and Mr Hobbs refused to leave the field of play, therefore he abandoned the Fixture. There were 3 WEFC players stood 2-3 yards away at the time.
- g. The WEFC players had repeated comments such as that Mr Crump did not know the Laws of the Game and was referring inappropriately given it was a friendly, then refused to give their names when asked by Mr Crump and instead laughed at him. Mr Crump identified the numbers 5 and 8 and confirmed the 5 had called him a 'fat cunt'.
- h. Following the Fixture being abandoned, two other WEFC players (this being the 5 and 8) came running over to him from 25 yards away and swore at him. Mr Crump stated he was stood in the centre circle at this time. One of these was Lewis Afflick, who Mr Crump identified as being on the video call during the hearing.
- i. He had explained to Lewis Afflick that he had applied the Laws of the Game in sending players to the sin bin. Lewis Afflick became more and more angry and then said that he would stab Mr Crump if he saw him in the street. Mr Crump also stated that Lewis Afflick said that he knew where Mr Crump worked, which was as a refuse collector.
- j. Lewis Afflick was stood about 10 yards away from him at the time and had to be physically restrained by 3 players. The comments were said very loudly and were 'If I see you on street I'll stab you I know where you work as a bin man'. Mr Crump confirmed that he issued Lewis Afflick with a red card for this language.
- k. The comments were said aggressively, about a 9 out of 10 in terms of volume. Mr Crump stated that he feared for his safety.
- l. A referee from another nearby pitch came to check that he was ok after the Fixture, such had been the volume and amount of commotion.

20. Mr Hobbs stated that:

- a. He had been stood on the side of the pitch near the half-way line during the Fixture.
- b. The football had been good, however Mr Crump issued two yellow cards and sent two players to the sin bin, which seemed excessive seeing as it was a friendly.
- c. He had been upset when the second player had been sent to the sin bin and entered the field of play to ask Mr Crump about the decision. He accepted that he should not have entered the field of play. At the time, the referee had been stood in the centre circle, where he had spent most of the game, and he had been about half-way between the edge of the pitch and there. There were no other players close to Mr Crump.
- d. He walked onto the field of play and did not run. He asked Mr Crump why the second player had been sent to the sin bin. In return, Mr Crump was dismissive. Mr Hobbs confirmed he was frustrated with the decisions but not aggressive.

- e. Mr Crump asked for his name which was confirmed, then issued a yellow card and asked him to leave the field of play, which he did. He did not witness Mr Crump issue a red card.
- f. He believed Lewis Afflick may have been present at this time, along with the opposing manager, but could not confirm for definite.
- g. As he was walking off the field of play he was not aware of what lead to the game was abandoned. He did not hear much noise behind him leading up this but heard the referee blow his whistle three or four times and, when he turned round to look once he had left the pitch, he did not see any players near to Mr Crump.
- h. He was aware that the opposing team had sent an email to the AFA complaining about Mr Crump and this decision, which had been sent without contact from WEFC. Mr Hobbs confirmed WEFC had not played JBRFC previously.
- i. Once he was aware the Fixture had been abandoned, he did not see Lewis Afflick speaking to the referee as he immediately went and agreed with the JBRFC manager that they would continue without a referee.

21. Lewis Afflick stated that:

- a. He had been stood near Mr Hobbs after he had been asked to leave the field of play by Mr Crump. He had not heard the exchange between Mr Hobbs and Mr Crump due to being stood too far away, with him being stood between the side of the pitch and the centre circle, but heard the referee ask him to leave and, as Mr Hobbs left the field of play, he walked alongside him.
- b. He did not hear any comments said by players to Mr Crump after Mr Hobbs had been asked to leave the field of play. The referee blew his whistle to abandon the Fixture about 10 seconds later, when he and Mr Hobbs were stood about 10 yards from the side of the pitch.
- c. After the Fixture had been abandoned the referee started to walk back towards the middle of the pitch and all the players walked towards the side. Their paths did not cross, but when he was about 8 or 9 yards away he shouted to the referee that he was 'shit' and had 'made the game all about him'.
- d. No other players were near to the referee at the time, with any players being stood near him. His brother Curtis had been present and had made a comment about him being a 'bin man' Curtis knew this was the case as outside of football he had had an issue with Mr Crump whilst Mr Crump was working as a refuse collector and Curtis had been in the street.
- e. He would never use language such as that alleged by Mr Crump and did not hear any other players using the words set out. All that was said was what he accepted he said and Curtis shouting 'leave him along he's just a bin man'.
- f. He was not a qualified referee and did not make this suggestion to Mr Crump during the Fixture.

22. Curtis Afflick stated that:

- a. He was Lewis' twin brother.
- b. He had been on the pitch for 6-7 minutes before getting sin binned. He then stood on the side of the pitch with Mr Hobbs.
- c. After the second sin bin he saw Chris walk onto the field of play to speak with the referee. He did not hear what was said but saw the referee issue a yellow card. He did not see a red card get issued.

- d. At the time the referee was towards the middle of the pitch, with Mr Hobbs about 10 metres from him.
  - e. There was no-one else stood near the referee, he then abandoned the Fixture. At this point Mr Hobbs was stood near him as he had been walking off the field of play.
  - f. Following this he saw the referee walk to the middle of the pitch, whilst players walked towards the side of the pitch. He saw Lewis shout that the referee was 'shit' and, following this whilst stood next to him, Lewis shouted 'leave him alone he's just a bin man'. He did not hear anyone else say anything.
23. Mr Hill stated that:
- a. He was not present on the day of the Fixture but had been shocked when he had received reports of the approach of the referee, particularly given the fact the Fixture was a friendly.
24. In summary, Mr Hobbs stated that it was clear that JBRFC supported WEFC, despite not knowing the Club. Mr Hobbs confirmed that witnesses from JBRFC were keen to attend but were unable to do so due to a wedding for someone within the Club.
25. In summary, Mr Hill stated that there were several discrepancies in Mr Crump's reports and he was surprised of the approach to sin binning and yellow carding, given the Fixture was a friendly. Mr Hill stated the email from JBRFC about Mr Crump had been unprompted, which painted a picture of the day.
26. In summary, Lewis Afflick stated that he accepted shouting that the referee was 'shit' and had 'made the game all about him', for which he had been issued a red card, but strongly denied the other allegations. Lewis Afflick stated that he believed the incident between Mr Crump and his twin brother from outside of football had resulted in Mr Crump looking to 'get' the family.
27. All confirmed they were happy they had received a fair hearing.
28. The Commission agreed Mr Crump simply repeated his previously provided written statements when giving evidence. The Commission noted that, when pressed and Mr Crump instead gave live evidence, several inconsistencies appeared concerning numbers of players present, distances and whether cards had been issued and submitted for processing.
29. The Commission agreed that, whilst it had to give appropriate weight to the written evidence of JBRFC, it noted that the Club had not backed the referee's version of events and made no mention of the allegations presented. Further, the Commission noted the report seemingly suggested that JBRFC also did not agree that the Fixture should have been abandoned.
30. The Commission noted that, whilst Mr Crump had stated that another referee had made sure that he was ok after the Fixture had been abandoned, no report had been received from that match official.
31. The Commission noted that Mr Hobbs accepted he entered the field of play without invitation whilst frustrated to question the decision to sin bin a player. The Commission noted that Lewis Afflick admitted that he shouted 'you're shit' to the referee, for which he had been issued a red card. The Commission noted that the Fixture had been abandoned by the match official, following Mr Hobbs being issued a yellow card having come onto the field of play to query decision-making.

32. Taking all of the above into account, the Commission unanimously found that Hobbs Charge 1 and WEFC Charge 1 were found proven. The Commission noted that Lewis Afflick had been issued a red card for the accepted language, therefore agreed that Afflick Charge 1 should be found not proven.
33. The Commission was advised that Mr Hobbs had no previous record, with WEFC having 1 previous proven E20 charge from April 2018, for which the Club received a £20 fine.
34. The Commission referred to Regulation 40 of the FA Disciplinary Regulations General Provisions which states 'save where expressly stated otherwise, a Regulatory Commission shall have the power to impose any one or more of the following penalties or orders on the Participant Charged...'. The Commission noted the range of penalties or orders available.
35. The Commission considered the Football Association Sanction Guidelines. The Commission ordered that the Mr Hobbs incident should be considered a 'low' level of seriousness. The Commission agreed that a fine of £20 was appropriate with 5 penalty points being issued against WEFC. The Commission ordered that the WEFC incident should be considered a 'low' level of seriousness. The Commission agreed that a fine of £30 was appropriate with 5 penalty points being issued against WEFC. The Commission

#### Outcome

36. The Commission ordered that Mr Hobbs be:
  - a. Fined the sum of £20; and
  - b. The Commission ordered that WEFC be issued with 5 penalty points.
37. The Commission ordered that WEFC be:
  - a. Fined the sum of £30; and
  - b. Issued with 5 penalty points.
38. The Commission ordered that the charge against Lewis Afflick be found not proven on the basis that he had already been issued with a red card for the language found proven.
39. There is the right to appeal these decisions, in accordance with FA Regulations.

Alan Darfi  
Ellie Menezes  
Louise Dorling

6 September 2021