

**Disciplinary Commission (“The Commission”)**

**On behalf of**

**Amateur Football Alliance (“AFA”)**

**In the matter of**

**Mr. Andrew HUNNABLE - Case ID:11484601M**

**Hearing Summary including Written Reasons**

**Introduction**

1. This is a hearing summary and includes written reasons for the decision of the Disciplinary Commission which sat on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
2. The Commission members, all of whom are members of the FA’s National Serious Case Panel were Mr. Tom Edwards (Chairman), Mrs. Anita Poulman and Ms. Judith Duffin (“The Commission”). Mr. Ravel Cheosiaua had been appointed as Commission Secretary.

**The Charge**

3. AFA had raised a charge against Mr. Andrew Hunnable as follows:-

Charge 1: FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including physical contact or attempted physical contact and threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour)

The charge was detailed as follows:-

*“Details: “...It is alleged that Andrew Hunnable used violent conduct and/or threatening and/or abusive and/or indecent and/or insulting language contrary to FA Rule E3.1 and it is further alleged that this constitutes Physical Contact or attempted Physical Contact against a Match Official as defined in FA Regulations. This refers to the allegation that Mr Hunnable verbally abused the Match Referee, saying to him “fuck off”, or similar, and/or it is also alleged that Mr Guerra made physical contact with the Match Referee...” (sic)*

AFA also raised an alternative, lesser charge as follows:-

Alternate Charge 1: FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official - (including threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour)

The charge had been raised following alleged misconduct by Mr. Hunnable, a player with Bank of England Fourth (“Bank”), during the match between Bank and Crouch End Vampires Fourth (“Crouch”) played on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023 in the AFA Junior Novets Cup.

## Evidence

4. AFA received a misconduct report, dated 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023, from the match referee, Mr. Giuseppe Pentangelo, in which he said, *"...At minute 8' of the second half, I gave a throw-in for the home team, Andrew Hunnable questioned verbally, moaning at me, at first I told him to calm down, but then he called me fucking idiot, so I gave him a straight red card. However the player refused to leave the pitch, slowing down the game. I had to tell him to leave at different times, then he told me to fuck off and straight after pushed me like to make me fall on the pitch, one of his teammates was close to me, he had to take him away because he was still refusing. The whole Bank of England team apologised for his behaviour. After the game, Andrew Hunnable apologized only for the intent to come towards me, insisting at different times to make me change my mind and not proceed with a match report on what happened. Situations like this are unforgivable and shamefully embarrassing, again an act of violence towards an official completely for free..."* (sic).
5. As a result of receiving that misconduct report AFA undertook an investigation, during which further information/observations were requested from Mr. Pentangelo and Bank.
6. In providing further information on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and in response to questions asked of him by AFA Mr. Pentangelo said, *"...Andrew pushed me on my chest...He indeed used two hands...It was a strong push, I wasn't expecting it and I lost my balance, but I stayed up only because I'm fit...I didn't (fall) but it was a strong push and quite aggressive frankly...I want to specify and insist to the point that he literally insisted by following me, just me and him, to close an eye to what happened, quite rude and disrespectful, he literally asked me three times to do it, with a cheeky attitude..."* (sic)
7. In providing an initial response on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and on behalf of Bank, Mr. David Latto, its secretary, said *"...I will gather responses and send these over by Friday. It goes without saying that I'm very sorry this happened, and Andrew is fully aware he should have conducted himself appropriately – he apologised to the referee on the day. But of course there's no excuse for what happened..."* (sic). Subsequently statements were provided to AFA by Mr. Latto and Mr. Hunnable.
8. In his statement, dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023, Mr. Latto said, *"...I was on the pitch and in the proximity of the incident and the events leading up to it, so will offer my perspective on what happened as well as reflections from the club's perspective. Around 10-15 minutes into the second half...Andrew Hunnable...was given a straight red card for using offensive/abusive/aggressive language. I was around 15-20 yards from the incident, and Andrew's offensive language was not audible to me, but I was close enough to hear the conversation immediately prior and after the red card...Andrew asked the referee...in a moderate tone...why the Bank of England AFC*

*had not received a free kick for an incident immediately prior to the team conceding that one...Andrew was then visibly frustrated with the answer he received, and as he walked away from the referee it is my understanding that he said "f\*\*\* off"...The referee then called Andrew back and handed him a straight red card...Andrew and the team captain Tiarnan Bown approached the referee to clarify the situation...By this point, I had moved to within 10 yards of Andrew and the referee. With it clear that the red card would stand, Andrew moved to leave the pitch and he pushed the referee out of his way as he walked past him (with a hand on the referee's shoulder). Nearby players from both teams checked on the wellbeing of the referee and remarked to Andrew that his actions were wrong and unnecessary. Andrew proceeded to vacate the pitch without further escalation. After the game Andrew apologised to his teammates and to the referee as he clearly understood that what he did was not acceptable...I am of the opinion that this was highly likely to be an isolated incident, with mitigating circumstances given the nature of the red card which preceded it..." (sic).*

9. In his statement, dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023, Mr. Hunnable said *"...During the football match against Crouch End Vampires on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023 I was given a red card for an offence. I admit using offensive language which led to me receiving the red card. The comment was not directed nor personal to the referee of the match. It was said in the heat of the moment as I thought decisions made were unfair and inconsistent. When the card was given, I asked the referee why this decision had been made, to which I was completely ignored and disregarded. This was very frustrating and upon exiting the pitch I did brush past him, making contact with his left shoulder, no in a rough or aggressive manner. The decision of the referee was very disappointing, especially with no explanation. I understand that my actions were wrong and I got carried away within the moment, for that I am disappointed. Once the game had ended, I approached the referee and gave an apology. We shook hands and he accepted it..."* (sic).
10. At the conclusion of the investigation the charge against Mr. Hunnable was raised by AFA on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Due to the seriousness of the charge raised against him Mr. Hunnable was immediately suspended from all football and football activities until the matter had been dealt with by a Disciplinary Commission.
11. An on-line response to the *"physical contact"* charge was received from Mr. Hunnable in which a plea of *"Accept – Verbal Plea"* had been entered. The lesser, alternative charge would not therefore be considered. No further written response to the charge was received from him at that stage.
12. The Commission convened by *"Microsoft Teams"* video conference at 6.30 pm on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 to receive the verbal plea requested by Mr. Hunnable. The case papers in relation to the charge raised had been supplied to the Commission members and been studied by them.

13. As Mr. Hunnable had accepted the charge raised against him the Commission was only concerned with determining the sanction to be imposed. For clarity it should be noted that, after considering all the evidence in the matter, the Commission was content to accept his plea.
14. Mr. Cheosiaua advised the Commission of Mr. Hunnable's disciplinary record over the last 5 years which, apart from some cautions, showed 2 sendings-off for the use of offensive language, one in 2018 and one in 2019. There was no other recorded misconduct. Mr. Hunnable was invited to submit his plea for leniency, which he did in a manner which assisted the Commission, and during which he said that he had played football since he was a youth and had played for Bank of England FC for about 10 years, since he was 18. He again expressed his remorse for making contact with the referee. He then left the hearing whilst the Commission considered the sanction to be imposed.
15. The foregoing is a summary of the principal submissions provided to the Commission. It does not purport to contain reference to all the points made, 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.
16. Reference was then made to FA Rule E3.1, along with Regulations 96, 101 and 102 of Part D, Section Three of the FA's Disciplinary Regulations and the Disciplinary Sanctions Guidelines issued by the FA in coming to its decision. It noted that the sanction for "*physical contact or attempted physical contact against a match official*" was:-
  - an immediate suspension from all football activities for a period of between 112 days and 2 years. The recommended entry point, prior to considering any mitigating or aggravating factors is 182 days;
  - a fine of up to £150, with a mandatory minimum fine of £75;
  - an order that the participant completes a face-to-face education programme before the time-based suspension is served or within 28 days of the Disciplinary Commission's decision, whichever is the later.
17. The Commission considered if there were any mitigating or additional aggravating factors in respect of the matter before it. It found mitigating factors in Mr. Hunnable's early acceptance of the charge, his apology to the referee at the end of the match and the remorse shown. An aggravating factor was found in his previous disciplinary record in respect of being sent off on 2 previous occasions for the use of offensive language. It also noted that he had been issued with an interim suspension which took effect on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

### **Outcome**

18. Having taken into consideration all the facts in the matter the Commission determined that the following sanction be imposed on Mr. Hunnabale:-
- an immediate suspension from all football activities for 161 days commencing with effect from 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023;
  - a fine of £75;
  - a requirement for Mr. Hunnabale to undertake the appropriate face-to-face FA Education Course before the date his 161-day suspension imposed for the matter has been completed. If he fails to do so within that timescale he is to be suspended from all football activity until such time as he is in compliance with this order. Details of the course will be provided to him;
  - 9 disciplinary penalty points imposed on Bank of England FC.
19. Mr. Hunnabale was readmitted into the hearing and advised of the sanction. He was also advised that the Commission's decision would be confirmed in writing and that there is a right of appeal against such in accordance with the relevant provisions set out in the Rules and Regulations of the Football Association.

Mr. Tom Edwards, Chairman

Mrs. Anita Poulman

Ms. Judith Duffin

21<sup>st</sup> December 2023