

FA NATIONAL SERIOUS CASE PANEL  
DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION  
CHAIRMAN SITTING ALONE  
*on behalf of Amateur Football Alliance*

CORRESPONDENCE HEARING

*of*

**IIHAN CELEBI**

MILL HILL VILLAGE FIRST

[Case ID: 11768488M]

THE DECISION AND REASONS OF THE COMMISSION

## **Introduction**

1. On 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024, Mill Hill Village (“the Club”) played a fixture against Bealonians FC Third (“Bealonians”) – collectively the “Match”.
2. The conduct of Mr Ilhan Celebi (“IC”) a Club player was reported.
3. The Amateur Football Alliance (“Amateur FA”) investigated the reported incident.

## **The Charge**

4. With dispensation from the FA, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024, Amateur FA charged IC:
  - 4.1. with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3 - Improper Conduct (including foul and abusive language) (“the 1<sup>st</sup> Charge”)  
  
and/or
  - 4.2. with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3.2 - Improper Conduct – aggravated by a persons Ethnic Origin, Colour, Race, Nationality, Faith, Gender, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation or Disability in that it is alleged that Ilhan Celebi used abusive and/or indecent and/or insulting language contrary to FA Rule E3.1, and it is further alleged that this is an aggravated breach as defined by FA Rule E3.2 because it includes a reference to colour. This refers to the comment(s) “black prick” or similar (“the 2<sup>nd</sup> Charge”)

5. The relevant section of FA Rule E3 states:

*“E3.1 A Participant shall at all times act in the best interest of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or a combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour.”*

And E3.2 provides that a *breach of Rule E3.1 is an “Aggravated Breach” where it includes a reference, whether express or implied, to any one or more of the following :- ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability.*

6. Amateur FA included with the charge letter the evidence that it intended to rely on in this case.
7. IC was required to respond to the charges by 5<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

## **The Reply**

8. On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 IC responded to the charges and denied the same requesting that they be determined in his absence at a Correspondence Hearing.

## **The Commission**

9. The Football Association (“The FA”) appointed me, Karen Hall, as a Chairman member of National Serious Case Panel, to this Discipline Commission as the Chairman Sitting Alone to adjudicate in this case.

## **The Hearing & Evidence**

10. I adjudicated this case on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024 as a Correspondence Hearing (the “Hearing”).
11. I had received and read the bundle of documents prior to the Hearing.
12. The following is a summary of the principal submissions provided to me. 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 I did not take such point, or submission, into consideration when I determined the matter. For the avoidance of doubt, I have carefully considered all the evidence and materials furnished with regard to this case.

13. The Match Referee, Mr Jake Hinckson, provided a Report dated 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 in which he states that in the 90<sup>th</sup> minute of the Match a Bealonians player, Mr Rhys Clements (“RC”) reported that a Club player, Mr Andres Aspa, called him a “black prick”. Mr Hinckson did not hear this although noted that the two players had been arguing as a free kick had been given against RC.
14. As part of the investigation, Amateur FA sought further clarification from the Referee. In an email dated 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024 he further stated that each player accused the other of lying over their version of events.
15. Bealonians submitted an undated Statement from RC in which he states that a foul was given in the corner against him and the Club player kicked him, so he responded. The Referee “sorted that” and RC left. The Club player followed him and words were exchanged as the Club player called him a “geezer”. RC responded and said the Club player was a “fucking prick”. The Club player replied and called him a “black prick”. He reported this to the Referee after the Match who was “helpful” and “sat with him for a bit”. The undated Statement was corroborated by a formal Statement from RC dated 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024. RC also stated that no other player was close enough to hear the exchange.
16. In an undated letter to the FA, the Club stated that they had played IC under the name of another registered player (Mr Andres Aspa) who had pulled out on the morning of the Match and who was the Club player referred to the Referee’s report.
17. In response to the charges, IC provided an undated Statement in which accepts that he called the Bealonians player a “fucking cunt” following a physical exchange between them. He apologises for that but denies that at any time he referred to the player as a “black cunt”. When the player accused him of saying that, he lost his temper. He goes on to say that he is of mixed ethnicities and would never say such a comment.
18. That concluded relevant evidence in this case.

### **Standard of Proof**

19. The applicable standard of proof required for this case is the civil standard of the balance of probability. This standard means, I would be satisfied that an event occurred if I considered that, on the evidence, it was more likely than not to have happened.

### **The Findings & Decision**

20. IC denied both charges.
21. RC provides a Statement and is clear and concise about what he says that he heard. There was clearly an exchange between him and IC, but no one else heard this. The Referee saw an argument between the two but did not hear what was said. RC reported the alleged aggravated comment to the Referee. There is no corroborative evidence of the aggravated comment, though I accept that RC himself states that no one else would have heard the comment.
22. IC accepts that he called RC a “fucking cunt” and that he should not have done so.
23. I have to be more satisfied than not that on the basis of the evidence before the Hearing that the aggravated comment was made. I cannot be so satisfied.

24. On the basis of his own admission of using the phrase “fucking cunt”, in respect of the 1<sup>st</sup> Charge of misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3 - Improper Conduct (including foul and abusive language), I found that the charge was PROVEN.
25. In respect of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Charge, given the evidence above, and in respect of the allegation that he was guilty of improper conduct, including foul and abusive language and that in addition this was aggravated by a person’s Ethnic Origin, Colour, Race, Nationality, Faith, Gender, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation or Disability, I found that the charge was NOT PROVEN.

### **Previous Disciplinary Record**

26. After finding the charge proven, I sought IC’s offence history. I note that IC has no previous proven misconduct charges in the preceding five years.

### **Mitigation**

27. No mitigation was found in the case bundle.

### **The Sanction**

28. The relevant FA Disciplinary Regulations on sanction states that the appropriate sanction is a suspension from football and all footballing activities of between 1- 10 matches.
29. After taking into account the facts of this case I note that IC used a derogatory term towards an opposition player. An appropriate sanction is a suspension of 3 (three) matches.
30. After taking into consideration all circumstances in this case, Mr Celebi is:
- 30.1. to serve an immediate suspension from all football and football activities for 3 (three) matches;
  - 30.2. fined a sum of £20 (twenty pounds); *and*
  - 30.3. 6 (six) Club Disciplinary Points to be recorded.
31. The decision is subject to the right of appeal under the relevant FA Rules and Regulations.

Signed...

**Karen Hall F.Clnt.L.Ex** (Chair)

25<sup>th</sup> July 2024