

IN THE MATTER OF A FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION

BETWEEN:

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

and

- (1) CREWE ALEXANDRA FC; AND
- (2) BRADFORD CITY AFC.

WRITTEN REASONS AND DECISION OF
THE INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE
HEARING
ON 19 DECEMBER 2024

Background

1. These are the written reasons and decision made by an Independent Regulatory Commission which sat by video conference on 17 December 2024 to consider the consolidated charges against Crewe Alexandra FC and Bradford City AFC.
2. The Regulatory Commission members were Mr Gareth Farrelly, Chairman and Independent Football Panel Member, Mr Francis Duku, Independent Football Panel Member and Mr Ken Monkou, Independent Football Panel Member.
3. Mr Michael O'Connor, FA Judicial Assistant Manager, acted as Secretary to the Regulatory Commission.

Crewe Alexandra FC

4. By letter dated 10 December 2024, The Football Association charged Crewe Alexandra FC with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20.1 in respect of the English Football League Two fixture between Crewe Alexandra FC and Bradford City AFC that took place on 7 December 2024.
5. It was alleged that in or around the 57th minute of the fixture Crewe Alexandra FC failed to ensure that its players did not behave in a way which was improper and/or provocative.
6. The FA designated this as Standard Case.

Bradford City AFC

7. By letter dated 10 December 2024, The Football Association charged Bradford City AFC with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20.1 in respect of the English Football League Two fixture between Crewe Alexandra FC and Bradford City AFC that took place on 7 December 2024.
8. It was alleged that in or around the 57th minute of the fixture Bradford City AFC failed to ensure that its players did not behave in a way which was improper and/or provocative.
9. The FA designated this as a Non-Standard Case due to a previous proven breach of FA Rule E20 in a fixture against AFC Wimbledon on 21 September 2024.

Consolidated Proceedings

10. The above referenced Charges were consolidated pursuant to Regulation 13 of the Disciplinary Procedures Regulations of The FA Handbook Season 2024/25. It was stated on each Charge that the proceedings would be conducted together, and the Charges would be determined at a joint hearing.

Rules

11. FA Rule E20 states that –

Each Affiliated Association, Competition and Club shall be responsible for ensuring that its Directors, players, officials, employees, servants and representatives attending any Match do not:

E20.1 behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting or provocative.

Evidence

12. The FA included the following evidence with the respective charges:

- Report of the Match Referee, Mr. B Toner, dated 9 December 2024;
- Two video clips of the incident; and
- Essential Information for Clubs 2024-25.

13. The Match Referee Mr Ben Toner stated, in his Extraordinary Incident Report Form:-

“57th min. Mass confrontation that ended up 1 red card. 2 yellows cards on field. 1 sub cautioned and 2 stage 1 warnings.

Replies to the Charges

14. Crewe Alexandra FC admitted the charge by reply on 13 December 2024. They accepted the Standard Penalty 1 offered with the charge letter.
15. Bradford City AFC also admitted the charge by reply on 13 December 2024. They did not request a personal hearing, and their case was dealt with on the papers only. They submitted general mitigation setting out their position on the cause and culpability of those involved in the incident, the contents of which were read and noted by the Commission.

16. The following 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 of a point, or submission, in these reasons 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 has carefully considered all the written and video evidence in respect of this case.

Sanction

17. The Regulatory Commission viewed the video evidence in detail and gave consideration to a number of factors - the incident itself, the number of players involved from both sides, the duration of the incident, the level of aggression involved and the proximity to the crowd. There was no finding as to the level of culpability of both sides.
18. Given that The FA had designated this case as a Standard Case for Crewe Alexandra FC, the Commission were not required to assess their role in the incident. With regard to Bradford City AFC, the Commission considered the incident as well as previous sanctions imposed on Bradford City AFC with regard to breaches of Rule E20 which are detailed as follows:
- (1) The club was fined £1,000.00 for an incident that occurred in an English Football League Two fixture v Oldham Athletic AFC on 19 February 2022;
 - (2) The club was also fined £1,750.00 for an incident that occurred in an EFL Trophy fixture v Grimsby Town FC on 10 October 2023;
 - (3) The club was fined £2,250.00 for an incident that occurred in an English Football League Two fixture v AFC Wimbledon on 21 September 2024.
19. It was noted by the Regulatory Commission that this is the fourth incident of this nature in over two years and nine months. This is an aggravating factor. The club submissions were not persuasive. After the initial challenges by the Bradford City players, the No 6 was holding and pushing with the opposing No 4. It was accepted that this was instigated by the opposing player. This then escalated the incident with the Bradford City AFC number 3, 8 and 20 who became involved with some of the Crewe players and the No 6 remaining involved. It was not accepted that their actions were simply to defend their teammates or move people away. This was an aggravating factor.
20. In determining the fines issued to clubs at this level, the Commission considered the Standard Penalty Guidelines for League Two Clubs in relation to such incidents. However, this was not a Standard Case for Bradford City AFC, and the Commission has a discretion with regard to sanction. In the *Essential Information for Clubs 2024-2025*, it is stated, *inter alia*, that the maximum fine for Non-Standard E20 breaches in League Two is £10,000.00. Furthermore, the Guidance states: - “*for each successive breach of Rule E20, including E20.1 and E20.2, within a 12 month period the maximum fine shall double and then treble (and so on) as set out*”.

21. The Regulatory Commission did take into account the fact that the charge was admitted and acknowledged that the club recognised that the conduct of the players had fallen short of that expected and set out in the Participant Behaviour Charter. The Commission noted that any sanction must be fair and proportionate. However, taking the offending behaviour into account and the club's previous disciplinary record, notably this being the fourth incident within the previous five seasons, the Commission were minded to impose a fine in excess of £3,000.00. However, there was credit given for the admittance and the fine was reduced accordingly to £2,750.00.

Conclusion

22. The Regulatory Commission, having carefully considered the Regulations, have imposed the following sanction:

Bradford City AFC

- (i) Bradford City AFC is fined the sum of £2,750.00.

Crewe Alexandra FC

- (i) Crewe Alexandra FC accepted the standard penalty and fined the sum of £1,000.00.

Appeal

23. This Regulatory Commission decision is subject to the relevant Appeal Regulations.

Mr Gareth Farrelly, Chairman and Independent Panel Member

Mr Francis Duku, Independent Football Panel Member

Mr Ken Monkou, Independent Football Panel Member

23 December 2024