

IN THE MATTER OF
THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION ex parte THE WEST RIDING COUNTY FA

-v-

MR JOE BEDFORD

REASONS FOR DISCIPLINE COMMISSION DECISION
WEDNESDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2016

PARTIES

The Discipline Commission members were Mr Stephen Elphick, Miss Stacey Payne and Mr Tony Rock. Mr James Sanderson acted as Secretary to the Commission.

INTRODUCTION

1. These are written reasons for a Discipline Commission hearing on behalf of The West Riding County FA on Wednesday 14th September 2016 following two charges raised against Mr Joe Bedford arising out of the fixture Thornhill First v Howden Clough First on 17th August 2016.
2. By a letter dated 24th August 2016 Mr Bedford was charged as follows:-
 - 1) Under FA Rule E3 – Improper conduct (including foul and abusive language)
 - 2) Under FA Rule E3(2) – Improper conduct – aggravated by a persons Ethnic Origin, Colour, Race, Nationality, Faith, Gender, Sexual Orientation or Disability.
3. The details of the charges are that during the 75th minute of the said match and immediately after the referee had spoken to players from each of the two teams, Mr Bedford called a Thornhill First player, Mr Nadim Hussain, a “paki”.

4. The Commission were informed by the West Riding County FA that they had received pleas of not guilty from Mr Bedford.

CONCLUSION

5. The Commission had before it the following evidence:-
- Report of match referee, Steven Lynch dated 18th August 2016
 - E-mail of match referee, Steven Lynch dated 24th August 2016
 - E-mail from Rob Chapman, Thornhill FC Player Coach/Manager dated 19th August 2016
 - E-mails (x2) from Nadim Hussain, Thornhill FC player dated 19th August 2016
 - Statement of Robin Cammish, Howden Clough Open Age Secretary, undated
 - Statement of Joe Bedford of Howden Clough FC, undated
 - Statement of Stefan Godbold of Howden Clough FC, undated
 - Statement of Lloyd Illingworth, Howden Clough team secretary, undated
 - Statement of Karl Millner, Howden Clough Team Manager, undated
 - Statement of Oliver Lunn, spectator, undated
6. The Commission noted that Mr Bedford was accused of shouting “just stop it you paki” to Mr Hussain of Thornhill FC and that this caused Mr Hussain to leave the field of play. It was of note to the Commission that Mr Hussain describes that Mr Bedford shouted these words to him yet neither the referee or any of the other players (from either side) appears to have heard these words being used, despite the evidence suggesting several players would have been in earshot. Mr Chapman, in contradiction to the evidence of Mr

Hussain, suggests that he was told by another of the Thornhill players that Mr Bedford whispered something in the ear of Mr Hussain.

7. The Commission also took particular note of Mr Hussain's reaction to the words said to have been used by Mr Bedford. The inference being that Mr Hussain would not have reacted in the manner in which he did unless he was certain that Mr Bedford had used the words described.
8. Mr Bedford has offered an explanation to the Commission which is that he told Mr Hussain to "pack it in" as a result of the incident between Mr Hussain and Mr Godbold moments earlier. This explanation matches the one offered by Mr Bedford to Mr Chapman immediately after the incident was said to have occurred.
9. The Commission discussed the explanation given by Mr Bedford and determined that this explanation was credible when the situation of the game was taken into account. This was also the explanation that was offered in the period of time in which the incident was unfolding and as such is unlikely to have been created after the event.
10. When this is added to the lack of evidence in support of what Mr Hussain says that he heard Mr Bedford say to him the Commission reached the decision that the charges against Mr Bedford are, on the balance of probabilities, not proven.
11. In addition to the above findings the Commission wish to make clear that it finds that, on the basis of the evidence available, Mr Hussain had a genuine belief, albeit mistaken, that Mr Bedford had used the words complained of.

12. There is a right to appeal against the decision in accordance with FA Regulations.

Mr Stephen Elphick (Chairman)

Wednesday, 14th September 2016