

**Football Association Disciplinary Commission on behalf of
The Amateur Football Alliance**

**In the Matter of Improper Conduct Charges against Abdillah Sheda of
Old Tenisonians Veterans**

Reasons for Disciplinary Commission Decisions 12 May 2023

Introduction

1. The Disciplinary Commission, which was appointed by the Football Association, was formed of Roger Burden (Chair), John Goodwin and Pearl Agius.

Justyna Demuth was Secretary to the Commission which was held on-line.

The Charges

2. Abdillah Sheda was charged under FA Rule E3- Improper Conduct – Assault or Attempted Assault on a Match Official.
3. The Alliance put forward an alternate charge under FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including physical contact or attempted physical contact and threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).
4. The charges arose from the match Bank of England Veterans Firsts v Old Tenisonians Veterans played on 22/04/23.
5. Mr Sheda pleaded guilty to the primary charge and asked for a personal hearing in order to enter a plea for leniency.

Summary of the Evidence

6. I show below a summary of the evidence. As it is a summary, I do not purport to cover every detail but, for the avoidance of doubt, the Commission carefully read, listened to and considered, all the contributions.

Written Submissions from the County FA

7. A report from Antony Burton, the Match Referee, in which he said that Abdillah Sheda was shouting and swearing in an aggressive manner. Mr Burton showed him the red card after which Mr Sheda told Mr Burton that he should watch himself.
8. Mr Burton said that Mr Sheda again came at him and, without the support of Mr Sheda's teammates, Mr Burton thought that Mr Sheda would have hit him.

9. Mr Burton abandoned the game and then Mr Sheda kicked the ball at Mr Burton. The ball hit Mr Burton's watch and then went into his face. Mr Burton's watch was broken by the impact.
10. Mr Sheda was then marched away by his colleagues but continued threatening Mr Burton by saying that he was going to break Mr Burton's fucking neck and ruin him.
11. A statement from Gary Hyett of Bank of England Vets (2), in which he said that several players were shouting at the Ref and he gave one player the red card for shouting loudly and aggressively. The Referee then abandoned the match.
12. One player kicked the ball at the Referee and it struck the Referee in the back. The player who had been shown the red card threatened the Referee by saying he would punch him up.
13. A statement from Stephen Pisano of BOE Vets Reserves, in which he referred to an opposition player acting in a loud, aggressive and menacing manner towards the Referee but Mr Pisano could not recall the words used. He said that whilst he was talking to the Referee, he noticed a ball fly hard past him and hit the Referee about waist high.
14. A statement from Mark Woodward, player and Club Chairman, Bank of England Vets 2nds, in which he said that at one point, after the game was abandoned, a ball was kicked at the Referee and struck him but Mr Woodward did not see which player kicked the ball at the Referee.
15. A statement from Paul Gladstone, Player Manager of Old Tennisonians Vets, in which he said that Mr Sheda had verbally abused the Referee and become further enraged and angry when he was shown the red card.
16. He said that Mr Sheda kicked a ball in the direction of Mr Burton who was some 20 yards away. Mr Gladstone said that he did not believe that it was premeditated or that Mr Sheda intended to hit the Referee, but it did, breaking his watch.
17. Mr Gladstone said that it was a shock to everyone because Mr Sheda normally plays the game in the correct spirit and his outburst was out of character. He said that Mr Sheda has subsequently paid for a new watch and apologised for his actions.

Written Submissions on Behalf of Abdillah Sheda

18. A statement from Mr Sheda, dated 25/04.23, in which he began by insulting the Referee and suggesting that the Referee would exaggerate what took place. He said that he didn't say anything that warranted a red card and that the ball didn't hit the Referee's face.
19. He added that he accepted that he should have kept his mouth shut, that he was disappointed in himself and apologised to all concerned.
20. A letter from Mr Sheda, dated 05/05/23, in which he accepted his irresponsible behaviour/conduct towards a match official and apologised to all involved.
21. He said that he had been going through a bitter divorce since November 2022 and it had been a great strain mentally and emotionally and at times has affected his decision making, causing him to overreact.
22. He added that, as a devout Muslim, he had been observing a strict daily fast from dawn until sunset on the day of the match and had not eaten or drunk anything. This also had an effect on his nutrition and demeanor.
23. He asked for forgiveness and said that he would keep his emotions and frustrations in check in future.
24. **Verbal Plea for leniency by Abdillah Sheda**
25. Our Secretary told us that Mr Sheda's disciplinary record was completely clear.
26. I explained to Mr Sheda that, as he had pleaded guilty to the more serious of the charges, our scope for leniency was restricted to a range of suspension of between 5 years and 10 years. He said that he understood but wanted to explain things to us.
27. Mr Sheda told us that he had been playing football for 41 years and his actions that day were out of character. He wished that he could turn the clock back.
28. People outside the game would say that he was a good person but his actions were a build-up of a few things including a divorce after 14 years of marriage and his fasting towards the end of Ramadan.
29. He said that he was still angry when he wrote his first statement but this was because of the way some of his teammates had played. He said some turned up late to the game which was one with promotion on the line.

30. Referring to kicking the ball at the Referee, he said he was not a great kicker of the ball. He just kicked it and it hit the Match Official. He said that if he was to kick the ball at the Match Official again, he would almost certainly miss.
31. He said that, through his Manager, he had apologised to the Referee and replaced the broken watch.
32. He apologised to us for what had happened and said that football was an important factor in his life and, as well as playing, he trained kids.
33. When we asked what the effect of a long suspension would be he said that as he was 45 years old he would retire.

The Commission's Deliberations and Decisions

34. The FA's Sanction Guidelines for the offence state a suspension from all football for a period between 5 years and 10 years, plus a mandatory education programme.
35. We all agreed that this was the lowest category of an assault that we could imagine.
36. We were impressed that he had taken the trouble to meet us and to offer a full apology, which we felt was genuinely made.
37. He did say to us that if he kicked the ball at a Match Official again, he would miss, from which we deduced that he did kick the ball at the Referee on this occasion, despite his denial.
38. We gave him credit for pleading guilty to the more serious charge as we recognised that, with a little more thought and a little less honesty, he could have denied it and accepted the alternate charge.
39. Together with his guilty plea, his personal apology, his excellent record, and the low form of the assault, we agreed that he should receive the minimum 5 year suspension and attend the mandatory education programme, but there should be no fine.
40. Abdillah Sheda is suspended from all football for a period of 5 years. That suspension is backdated to 02/05/2023, the date on which he was automatically suspended.
41. He must complete an on-line FA Education Programme before the suspension ends, otherwise, the suspension will continue until he does complete the programme.

42. 7 Penalty points to be applied to Old Tenisonians Veterans.

These decisions are subject to the right of appeal under the relevant FA Rules and Regulations.

Roger Burden
Chair
12 May 2023