

In the matter of Sussex County Football Association, and Surrey FA, and Jordan Hall and Stewart Harris, and Holland Sports FC, and Wakehams Green.

FA NATIONAL SERIOUS CASE PANEL

DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

Sitting on behalf of Sussex County Football Association and Surrey FA

PERSONAL HEARING

of

JORDAN HALL

Wakehams Green

[Case ID: 11486267M]

&

STEWART HARRIS

Holland Sports Reserves

[Case ID: 11487204M]

And

VERBAL PLEA MITIGATION HEARING

of

HOLLAND SPORTS

[Case ID: 11486788M]

CONSOLIDATED WITH

CORRESPONDENCE HEARING

of

WAKEHAMS GREEN

[Case ID: 11486274M]

THE REASONS OF THE COMMISSION

Warning: This document contains foul and abusive language.

	<u>Page</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
1. Introduction	2	1-3
2. The Charge	3-6	4-15
3. The Reply	6	16-19
4. The Commission	6-7	20
5. The Hearing & Evidence	7 -23	21-54
6. Standard of Proof	23	55
7. The Findings & Decision	23-28	56-90
8. Verbal Plea Mitigation	28-30	91-98
9. Correspondence Case	30	99-102
10. Previous Disciplinary Record	30	103
11. Mitigation	30-31	104
12. The Sanction	31-34	105-118

Introduction

1. On Saturday 21st October 2023 Holland Sports Reserves played Wakehams Green First in a Mid Sussex Football League fixture, collectively “**the match**”.
2. Sussex County Football Association (“**Sussex FA**”) received a report of Improper Conduct following the match.
3. Sussex FA investigated the reported incidents.

The Charges

4. On 21st November 2023 Sussex FA charged **Jordan Hall**, (“**the Participant**”) with:

- i. Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3.1 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including physical contact or attempted physical contact and threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).
 - ii. It is alleged that Jordan Hall used violent conduct and/or threatening and/or abusive and/or indecent and/or insulting language/behaviour 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 Hall entered the pitch, grabbed the referee’s cards from his hand and threw them on the floor whilst saying “*you’ve not no cards now so the match is over*”. It is further alleged that the manager refused to continue, resulting in the match being abandoned.
5. Also, on 21st November 2023 Sussex FA charged Wakehams Green with:
- i. Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20 – Failed to ensure directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any Match.
 - ii. It is alleged that Wakehams Green failed to ensure that directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives attending any match do not behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting, or provocative contrary to FA Rule E20.1. This refers to the allegation that a mass confrontation took place which involved players from both clubs.
6. Also, on 21st November 2023 Sussex FA charged Holland Sports with:
- i. Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20 – Failed to ensure directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any Match.
 - ii. It is alleged that Holland Sports failed to ensure that directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives attending any match do not behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting, or provocative

contrary to FA Rule E20.1. This refers to the allegation that a mass confrontation took place which involved players from both clubs causing the abandonment of the game.

7. On 23rd November 2023 Surrey FA charged Stewart Harris with:

- i. Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3.1 – Improper Conduct (including violent conduct and/or threatening and/or abusive language /behaviour).
- ii. It is alleged that Stewart Harris has pushed the opposition Chairman following the end of the game, or similar.

FA Rules and Regulations

8. The relevant section of FA Rule E3.1 states: ¹

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

9. The relevant section of FA Rule E20 states:²

“E20: Each Affiliated Association, Competition and Club shall be responsible for ensuring that its directors, players, officials, employees, servant, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any Match and do not:

E20.1: use words or otherwise behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting, or provocative”.

10. The relevant section of FA Rule 96.2 states: ³

“96.2 Physical contact or attempted physical contact: physical actions (or attempted

¹ Page 143 of the FA Handbook 2023/2024 (online version) & Page 143 of the FA Handbook 2023/2024

² Para 20 Page 148 of the FA Handbook 2023/2024 (online version) & FA Handbook 2023/2024

³ Page 218 of the FA Handbook 2023/2024 and online version

actions that are unlikely to cause injury to the Match Official but are nevertheless Confrontational”. [sic].

11. Both Sussex FA and Surrey FA, included with the charge letters the evidence that they intended to rely on in this case.
12. **Mr Jordan Hall** was required to respond to his charge by 28th November 2023.
13. **Mr Stewart Harris** was required to respond to his charge by 7th December 2023.
14. **Holland Sports** was required to respond to their charge by 28th November 2023.
15. **Wakehams Green** was required to respond to their charge by 28th November 2023.

The Reply

16. **Mr Jordan Hall** responded to his charge online, date unknown. Mr Hall **denied** his charge and a **Personal Hearing** was requested.
17. The Club responded on behalf of **Mr Stewart Harris** via FA Whole Game System on 30th November 2023. Mr Harris denied his charge and a **Personal Hearing** was requested.
18. **Holland Sports** responded to their charge via the FA Whole Game System on 26th November 2023. Holland Sports **denied** their charge and a **Personal Hearing** was requested.
19. **Wakehams Green** responded to their charge online, date unknown. Wakehams Green **accepted** their charge and asked for their case to be dealt with in their absence as a **Correspondence Hearing**.

The Commission

20. The Football Association (“**The FA**”) appointed the following members of the FA National Serious Case Panel to this Independent Discipline Commission to adjudicate in this case:

Mr Ian Stephenson (Commission Chair)

Mr Minesh Gupta

Mrs Shan Jaehrig

Mr Ravel Cheosiaua, a Member of the FA National Secretary Panel and from Worcestershire FA, was appointed as Secretary to the Hearing.

The Hearing and Evidence

21. The Commission convened to adjudicate this Personal Hearing at 6pm on Monday 11th December 2023. The Hearing was conducted “**virtually**” via Microsoft Teams, “**the Hearing**”, “**We/Us**”.
22. During the Case Management process carried out by the Commission Chair with each of the Participants charged, Mr Paul Kavanagh, the Representative of Holland Sports FC informed the Commission that he had misunderstood the detail in his Club’s charge. He accepted that there had been conduct from some of his players which could be seen on the video which he now conceded represented disorderly conduct and he asked to be allowed to change the Club’s plea to “Guilty Plea” as the Club now accepted the charge after re-consideration. The Commission agreed that they would accept Mr Kavanagh’s request and the Secretary to the Hearing duly noted the Club’s change of plea.
23. The charge relating to Holland Sports FC would now be considered as a **Verbal Plea Mitigation Hearing**.
24. The Personal Hearing was attended by the following County witnesses in support of the charges brought against the Participants charged:
Mr Stewart Harris, the Match Official
Mr Andrew Sells
Mr Harry Dalton
Mr Leigh Iles
Mr Luke Skinner
25. The Personal Hearing was attended by the following witnesses in defence of the

charges brought by Sussex FA, and Surrey FA respectively (“**the CFA**”):

Mr Jordan Hall, (the Participant charged)

Mr Stewart Harris, (the Participant charged).

Mr Paul Kavanagh (the Representative of the Club charged).

26. Mr Kevin Carpenter attended the Hearing as an Observer of the Football Association. He would take no part in the Hearing or the Hearing outcome.

27. The relevant section of Regulation 13 of the Disciplinary Regulations states ⁴:

“Where the subject matter of or facts relating to a Charge or Charges against one or more Participant(s) is sufficiently linked (including, but not limited to, where offences are alleged to have been committed in the same Match or where there is common evidence of The Association or the defence) and where appropriate for the timely and efficient disposal of the proceedings, The Association and/or the relevant panel shall have the power to consolidate proceedings so that they are conducted together and the Charges may be determined at a joint hearing. In respect of such matters: evidence adduced by or on behalf of a Participant shall be capable of constituting evidence against another Participant (the relevant panel shall give appropriate weight to such evidence)”.

28. The Commission had received and read the bundle of documents provided by both Sussex FA, and Surrey FA, prior to the Hearing. We also viewed all of the video footage that was submitted with the evidence bundle.

29. 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 in these reasons of any particular point, or submission, should not imply that we did not take such point, or submission, into consideration when we determined the matter. For the avoidance of doubt, we have carefully considered all of the evidence and materials furnished with regard to this case. The following evidence was provided in the case bundle:

⁴ Page 173 of FA Handbook 2023/2024 (Online edition) & Page 173 of the FA Handbook 2023/2024

30. An email from Paul Kavanagh to ‘*the Secretary*’ dated 21st October 2023 at 6:35pm.

The email informed the League that the Division 3 fixture had not been completed and stated that the match had been refereed by Stewart Harris, as there had been no referee assigned to the match. The email contained a report from Stewart Harris, the Club appointed referee.

31. A Witness Statement from Stewart Harris dated 30th October 2023. Mr Harris was the Club Appointed Referee as there was no League Referee appointed to this fixture. Mr Harris is a Club Official of Holland Sports FC. Mr Holland stated, and we quote:

“After around 75 minutes of the match, with the score at 1-0 to Holland Sports.

There was an incident involving Holland Sports player shirt 8 and Wakehams Green player shirt 9. They grabbed at each other and started arguing. I got them to separate showed both players a yellow card and also told them they were sin-binned for 10 minutes for the decent they showed. They both accepted this and started to leave the pitch. One of the Substitutes from Wakehams Green then ran on the pitch and attempted to punch the Holland Sports player shirt 8. This then ended up with a number of other players getting involved. I showed the Wakehams Green substitute a red card and he then tried to punch the Holland Sports goalkeeper. The Wakehams Green manager then came onto the pitch grabbed the cards from my hand, threw them on the floor and said you've got no cards now, so the match is over. His players wanted to continue the game, but the manager insisted they all left the field. So the match was abandoned after 75 minutes with the score at 1-0 to Holland Sports”.

32. A Witness Statement from Andrew Sells dated 25th October 2023. Mr Sells is a Committee Member of Holland Sports FC. Mr Sells stated, and we quote the relevant text:

“I am a committee member and parent for Holland Sports.

The match between Holland Sports 2nd team and Wakeham’s Green was refereed by Stuart Harris who is a coach for Holland Sports. Stuart kindly agreed to officiate in the

absence of league appointment. Hereafter in this statement I'll refer Stuart to as the referee.

[sic].

A few moments later the game stopped again after another incident on the far side of the pitch involving a Holland and Wakeham's player which I didn't see. The referee appeared to be dealing with it but Wakeham's Coach was complaining that the Holland player had 'swung a punch' or 'taken a swing' and that he should be sent off. The referee's decision had evidently been to 'Sin Bib' both players. Unhappy with this outcome the Wakehams Coach then went onto the pitch, continued across to the far side to the referee and confronted him. A mass pushing and shoving match then ensued involving most players. I didn't take too much of it in other than to notice the Wakeham's Coach childishly throw an Assistant Referee's flag".

[sic].

33. A Witness Statement from Harry Dalton dated 27th October 2023. Mr Dalton was a player of Holland Sports FC in the match. Mr Dalton stated, and we quote the relevant text:

[sic]

"The ref took control of situation and went to sin bin both wakehams number 9 and Holland number 8, both players were fine with this, but at the point the wakehams manager and subs were surrounding the ref. The Wakemans proceeded to take the refs cards out of his hand and then go to get lino flag from his team and throw of the pitch, he reaction was 'No cards and no flags, games abandoned'. He then walked away from the ref instructing his players to leave the field, most of them bar 1 or 2 didn't want to leave the field. He then came back to the ref again and 'said great game ref well done for ruining it' he then said it again and kept getting in the ref's face. The ref reacted by pushing him away to which this caused slightly more issues, but by then most of Holland & Wakemans green were bored with this reaction. His players proceeded to leave the field and game was abandoned".

34. A Witness Statement from Leigh Iles dated 30th October 2023. The Statement was recorded by Mr Paul Kavanagh. Mr Iles is a Club Official of Holland Sports FC in the match. Mr Iles stated, and we quote:

“Todlucas Scott (Holland Sports player) and Wakehams Green player shirt no 9, grabbed at each other and have a tussle and show dissent. Referee yellow cards them and sends them to the sin bin. Both players start to walk off, then substitute wearing a grey top with blond hair comes onto the pitch, is aggressive, trying to get to Todlucas and throws a punch. Their manager then gets involved and kept going on at the referee, taking the cards off of him and insisting the game had to be abandoned”.

35. A Witness Statement from Jordan Hall dated 21st October 2023. Mr Hall was a player of Holland Sports FC in the match. He is also a Participant charged in this matter. Mr Hall stated, and we quote:

“I was on the bench on my phone when I heard the whistle. So I looked up and everyone was crowded. Still don’t know what happened to kickstart it all. A wakehams green player in a grey jumper was really aggressive towards one of our players and the referee and swung a punch at them both. He then got sent off. The wakehams green manager then violently grabbed the red card off the ref and he threw the lineman flag. He then said that the ref ruined the game and he refused to play anymore and dragged his team off the pitch”.

36. An undated response from Wakehams Green Football Club. The response was titled; *“Wakehams Green FC – “Match Incidents Statements”.*

The response listed multiple match related incidents. In relation to the abandonment of the match the report stated, and we quote:

“Game Abandonment: Given the above issues, the abandonment of the game was a regrettable but necessary step to protect the players and maintain the integrity of the competition”.

37. An undated Statement from Luke Skinner. Mr Skinner is the Chairman of Wakehams Green Football Club. He stated, and we quote the relevant text:

[sic].

“During the tumultuous second half, it is my understanding that a Holland Sports player punched Matt Keating. The referee, to our astonishment, deemed this incident a "sin bin" offense, despite being reminded of the rules to the contrary. With tensions running high and physical altercations escalating, I made the decision to instruct all Wakehams Green players to temporarily walk away, prioritising the safety of everyone

involved. It was evident that one punch could lead to severe injury or even fatality, a scenario far removed from the spirit of football”. [sic].

The situation took a darker turn as the referee, Stuart Harris, was restrained after attempting to engage in physical confrontations with individuals. At the same time, Austin Hillier was subjected to a chokehold. In light of these developments, the decision between both teams was made to abandon the game in the interest of safety and sportsmanship”. [sic].

38. An undated Statement from Jordan Hall. Mr Hall is the Manager of Wakehams Green Football Club, and is a Participant charged. Mr Hall stated, and we quote the relevant text:

[sic].

“Minutes after, the number 8 for the home team kicks out at our number 9 and our number 9 retaliates verbally, in return their number 8 grabs his neck and pushes him away, resulting in lots of players and coaches from both teams rushing to the incident to protect their players/ diffuse the situation. the ref decides to send off one of our subs for entering the field of play and throwing punches (this is nowhere to been seen on any footage) he then proceeds to sin bin both number 9 and their number 8 which results in a bad reaction from us as their player physically assaulted ours and only got sin binned. This led to the ref telling us all to fuck off and offering us to fight. Whilst this is happening the Holland sports goalkeeper has got one of my players in a headlock from behind and once our player has broken free he then retaliates in self defence, like anyone would. The ref and the managers make the decision to abandon the game as resuming at that time would of ended in serious injury as both sets players (not all of course) were riled up and angry at this point”. [sic].

39. An undated Statement from Matthew Keating. Mr Keating was a Wakehams Green player in the match. Mr Keating stated, and we quote the relevant text:

[sic].

“After the referees language and hostile behaviour towards the wakehams green chairman the Holland sports manager /!4 then wakehams green chairman called to say he doesn’t want their respective teams playing on with this referee. Our chairman mentioned as he feels it’s unsafe for the players as the referee was not protective of the

situation and allowed the abuse and fouls continue through the game before the situation erupted after a foul on a wakehams player. In conclusion I had protected myself after being grabbed by the throat, and punched in the side following a kick off the ball which I called for the refs attention and then proceeded to resist the players arms trying to prevent being punched further. I was satisfied the game got abandoned as I felt the ref would of allowed the fouls to continue based on the amount of bias decisions that had gone the way of Holland sports and that both managers were calling for the game to be abandoned”.

40. An undated Statement from Austin Hillier. Mr Hillier was the Club Linesman of Wakehams Green in this match. He described on-field incidents which are not the subject of charges in this matter. He described seeing a “*brawl*” on the pitch towards the end of the match which resulted in himself entering the pitch and being sent off by the referee.

41. Still photographs (x2).

42. That concluded all of the Written Submissions provided in this matter.

Live Evidence provided to the Commission

43. The first County Witness to provide oral evidence to the Hearing was Stewart Harris, the Club Match Official. Mr Harris told us the following:

- i. The Written Statement that he submitted to the Association was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truthful and accurate and he invited us to accept it as evidence on which we could rely. At this stage he did not wish to correct, alter, or add anything further to his Written Statement.
- ii. He confirmed that the contents of his Statement were his recollection of what he saw and heard on the day.
- iii. He was the stand in Club Official as there was no League Appointed Referee assigned to this match. It was his Club’s Chairman and Mr Kavanagh that asked him to stand in

and referee because he had refereed before. Additionally, he usually does the flag for the first team as well. He has more of a clue than most.

- iv. He did not know who Mr Hall was. He thought that Mr Hall was something to do with the management of Wakehams Green Football Club, he noticed that Mr Hall was wearing something like a tracksuit.
- v. Mr Hall was constantly shouting orders from the sideline.
- vi. Apart from Mr Hall there were 3 or 4 people in a kit, including Mr Hall.
- vii. Words were being said. He was being called "*a cheat*", people were saying that his reffing was not acceptable. There was so much screaming and shouting going on.
- viii. He was then trying to deal with a situation that was in front of him. Mr Hall then came towards him with another person and "*pretty much said you've got no cards now so the match is over*".
- ix. He had shown a red card to a player who had been a substitute. This was on right hand side of the pitch, up at the top end of the pitch. The player that had received the red card was refusing to leave the pitch having been shown the red card 3 times.
- x. As he, (Mr Harris), turned round he saw a person who he believed to be Mr Hall approach and Mr Hall snatched the card from his hand and threw the card on the ground. The person, he believed to be Mr Hall said, "*You've got no cards now so the game is over*".
- xi. Every player in Mr Hall's team wanted to continue. The only person that did not want to continue was Mr Hall.
- xii. The match was abandoned because Mr Hall walked his players off the pitch and said "*We're not playing on anymore*". Consequently, there was nothing that he (Mr Harris) could do about it. Mr Hall instructed his players to leave the pitch which they did.
- xiii. Mr Harris told us that he was certain that the person who had taken the cards out of his hand and pushed him, and the person responsible for calling off the Wakehams Green players was Mr Hall. He stated that he was certain that having seen Mr Hall on

screen that this was the person that he had described and referred to as Mr Hall in his Statement and throughout providing his oral evidence.

44. We then heard from Luke Skinner. Mr Skinner is the Chairman of Wakehams Green Football Club. Mr Skinner told us the following:

- i. The Written Statement that he submitted to the Association was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truthful and accurate and he invited us to accept it as evidence on which we could rely. At this stage he did not wish to correct, alter, or add anything further to his Written Statement.
- ii. He confirmed that the contents of his Statement were his recollection of what he saw and heard on the day.
- iii. He did not see the alleged incident involving Mr Hall.
- iv. He did not see a red card produced to a player by Mr Harris.
- v. Despite being asked by the Commission Chair to relate only to the matters which were the subject of the charge Mr Skinner frequently talked over the Commission Chair attempting to make allegations about the behaviour of Mr Harris during the match.
- vi. At the request of the Commission Chair, and despite Mr Skinner saying that he did not need to see the video footage, a Veo clip was shown to Mr Skinner. The clip related to a person who had entered the pitch and who was apparently pushed by the referee.
- vii. Mr Skinner stated that the push was a “*minute push*” and conceded that it was him that had been pushed by the referee.
- viii. When asked why he was on the pitch because he was not a player or acting as an Official for the team, he told us that he was speaking to the Holland Sports Manager and asking him if he would referee because he “*was not in football for punches*” and he was unhappy at the performance of Mr Harris as the Match referee. If things had carried on as they were then someone would have got seriously hurt. He was a believer in prevention.

- ix. He described the situation as madness. He had been watching the match from the sidelines and he talked about the incident where two players were sent to the sin bin. He reiterated that he did not see a red card, it was a blue card that he had seen the referee issue to the two players involved. It was he that had said to the referee that he (Mr Skinner) was abandoning the match on the grounds of safety.
 - x. He could only say that he did not see a red card produced, he could not say that there wasn't a red card shown in the situation he had described.
 - xi. When asked if he could have missed the red card being shown he became a little argumentative and told us that he did not have eyes in the back of his head.
 - xii. He told us that the referee was more aggressive than he was. He (Mr Skinner) told everyone to leave the pitch as he *"wanted to stop the handbags"*. He stated that the referee pushed him, he did not push the referee. It was a low level push, around 1 on a scale of 1-10.
 - xiii. When asked why he thought that Mr Harris had pushed him he told us *"because he wasn't happy that me and the Holland manager told him that the game was off"*.
45. Next, we heard from Harry Dalton. Mr Dalton told us that the Written Statement that he submitted to the Association was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truthful and accurate and he invited us to accept it as evidence on which we could rely. At this stage he did not wish to correct, alter, or add anything further to his Written Statement.
46. He confirmed that the contents of his Statement were his recollection of what he saw and heard on the day. Mr Dalton told us the following:
- i. He was the Chair of Holland Sports FC, and he had played for his team in the match. He normally plays for the first team.
 - ii. He did not know anybody in, or connected with, Wakehams Green. He was involved with the game as the first team game was called off.

- iii. It was his perception that he did not think that the Wakehams Green management realised at the time that both players had been sin binned. The players sort of knew what was going on in his opinion.
- iv. He thought that the man on the screen in the Hearing, who he named as Mr Hall from the name visible on the screen, He said he did not look like the person that was involved with Mr Harris in the incident that resulted in the match being abandoned. He stated that he thought that Mr Hall was the Chairman of the Club. He described the manager of the team who had been arguing with Mr Harris, did not look like the man on the screen.
- v. He was clear that the man that took the cards off Mr Harris and then threw them on the floor was not Mr Hall. Mr Hall had a football kit on at the match, the man that took the cards was wearing a hat.
- vi. He did not know the identity of the person that took the cards off the referee because he did not know anybody from Wakehams Green Football Club.
- vii. At the time that the game was abandoned he was talking to the boys and most of them did not want to go off. Once the players realised that with the sin bin action taken by the referee had left the match being 10v10 with players, the players wanted to continue but the Wakehams Green manager did not want to continue.
- viii. The person that wanted the players to come off and end the match was very aggressive and he guessed that this is why we are here today.
- ix. The manager was "*in the refs face*", the manager then briefly went away but returned very soon after. The referee was agitated with the manager, and this went on for about 10 minutes.
- x. After about 10 minutes or so everyone had sort of had enough as it was raining.
- xi. The manager of Wakehams Green was making sarcastic comments towards the referee and also clapping the referee sarcastically.
- xii. The manager of Wakehams Green was "*in the face of*" Mr Harris. He did see Mr Harris push the manager slightly by way of a reaction to the way that the manager was

behaving towards Mr Harris. When he witnessed this he (Mr Halton) was about 15 yards away. The manager would not leave Mr Harris alone.

xiii. Despite what was happening the majority of the players were getting on quite nicely, despite not being able to believe what was happening.

xiv. He believed that the reason that the manager wanted the game to be abandoned was because there was no League Official in charge of the game and he believed that the manager had made things up to try to get the game up the agenda for a re-match.

xv. He believed that the manager, the person that took the cards from the referee and threw them to the ground, was wearing a green coat, he was not sure if that person was wearing a hat or a hood, it was something like that. He described the person as being aged 30s or 40s, being shorter than 6ft tall, and not being as large as the man on the screen, with apologies for saying that.

xvi. He told us that he was very clear about what he had seen and heard.

xvii. He recalled Mr Hall being present in the melee and described Mr Hall as being *“irritated but nothing like this guy”*, referring to the person that took and threw the referee’s cards.

47. Next, we heard from Andrew Sells. Mr Sells told us that the Written Statement that he had submitted to the Association was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truthful and accurate and he invited us to accept it as evidence on which we could rely. At this stage he did not wish to correct, alter, or add anything further to his Written Submission.

48. Mr Sells confirmed that the contents of his Statement were his recollection of what he saw and heard on the day. Mr Sells told us the following:

- i. He was a committee member of Holland Sports FC.
- ii. He sometimes helps out with the first team and sometimes runs the line.
- iii. He did not witness either incident.

- iv. He was standing on the other side of the pitch at the time the alleged incidents occurred.
- v. We referred to his statement and quoted “*A few moments later the game stopped. You say ‘Wakehams’s Coach then went onto the pitch and I saw him childishly throw the flag’*”. He stated that this was correct, but he could not see that person on the screen (of the Hearing). The person that he had seen throw the flag was a person that had been standing on the side, this person was not wearing a football kit at the time.

49. Next, we heard from Leigh Iles. Mr Iles told us that the Written Statement that he submitted to the Association was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truthful and accurate and he invited us to accept it as evidence on which we could rely. At this stage he did not wish to correct, alter, or add anything further to his Written Statement.

50. Mr Iles confirmed that the contents of his Statement were his recollection of what he saw and heard on the day. Mr Iles told us the following:

- i. A gent in a grey hoodie came onto the pitch, he thought the person was a substitute. This person was rather agitated and was throwing his arms around.
- ii. The manager took the cards out of Stewart’s (the referee’s) hands. The manager also had the linesman’s flag in his hand. The manager was not the linesman in this game.
- iii. He (Mr Iles) had gone onto the pitch to try and calm things down. The Wakehams Green manager was not for calming down.
- iv. The pitch did not contain dugouts. The teams were located on opposite sides of the pitch during the match.
- v. He did not know the manager/person that he had seen take the cards from Stewart. This person did not look like the person that he could see on the screen (of the Hearing).
- vi. The manager on the day was definitely not Mr Hall. He described the manager as being “*a little bit skinnier with no facial hair*”. At the time the manager was wearing a hat. The manager was definitely not Mr Hall.

- vii. Stewart was pushed by the manager before the manager took the cards from Stewart.
The manager then said “*Game abandoned*” and suggested that maybe he (Mr Iles) should referee the remainder of the match.
- viii. The manager did not want the game to continue.
- ix. He did not see Mr Harris touch or push anyone throughout the incident. He stated that Mr Harris was actually trying to back away from the confrontation.
- x. There were a couple of bodies trying to split things up and calm the situation down.
- xi. He told us that the mass confrontation lasted a good 5 minutes, possibly longer. He felt that if the game had re-started things could have happened again. Upon reflection he guessed that the mass confrontation lasted somewhere between 5 and 10 minutes before the match was abandoned.

Live Oral evidence in defence of the charge

- 51. The first Participant charged that we heard from was Jordan Hall. Mr Hall told us that the Written Statement that he had submitted to the Association was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truthful and accurate and he invited us to accept it as evidence on which we could rely. At this stage he did not wish to correct, alter, or add anything further to his Written Statement.
- 52. Mr Hall confirmed that the contents of his Statement were his recollection of what he saw and heard on the day. Mr Hall told us the following:
 - i. It was clear to him that there was a lot of confusion about who was who in this incident. He was the Club Captain in the manager’s absence.
 - ii. At this match he was on the side line. He knew who it was that had taken the card out of Mr Harris’s hand and thrown the card on the ground. That person was Luke Skinner.
 - iii. He did not see Mr Skinner do this. He knew that it would be Mr Skinner because it was Mr Skinner and the referee who were at each other.

- iv. He did not see the red card produced by Mr Harris or the action taken by Mr Harris in sending the players to the sin bins.
 - v. He was talking to the Wakehams Green Captain at the time, and he also spoke to player number 8 in an attempt to calm him down.
 - vi. The Club had emailed the League about what had happened, Mr Skinner had emailed Sienna at the County FA, and Mr Skinner had said that some of it was down to Mr Hall.
 - vii. He told Mr Skinner that he would still have to come to the Hearing.
 - viii. He saw Mr Skinner throw the Linesman's flag on the ground.
 - ix. He recalled that it was "*our Chairmans decision to abandon the match*", referring to it being Mr Skinner's decision to abandon the match.
 - x. He believed that the decision to abandon the match was made in the interests of safety as he thought that everybody was going to have a fight if the match continued.
 - xi. He did not see Mr Harris physically do anything; he has only seen the Veo footage.
 - xii. When asked if he saw the referee acting confrontationally and/or acting in a threatening manner he stated "*I'd be lying if I said not. It was just handbags, pathetic, it was like they were going to fight*".
 - xiii. He stated that Mr Harris was behaving in a calm way at times but not at other times. Mr Harris spoke to him (Mr Hall) calmly, then Mr Harris got aggressive because he (Mr Harris) had been pushed into. He said that Mr Harris would probably admit to being aggressive because "*they both were*".
 - xiv. He confirmed that Mr Skinner was "*absolutely aggressive towards Mr Harris*".
53. We then heard from Stewart Harris; the Participant charged. Mr Harris told us that the Written Statement that he had submitted to the Association was, to the best of his knowledge and belief, truthful and accurate and he invited us to accept it as evidence

on which we could rely. At this stage he did not wish to correct, alter, or add anything further to his Written Statement.

54. Mr Harris confirmed that the contents of his Statement were his recollection of what he saw and heard on the day. Mr Harris told us the following:

- i. His version was that the reason that he pushed the person was to get the person away from him. This person had got so close to him (Mr Harris) that he had got into his personal space.
.
- ii. He had pushed the person using minimal force.
- iii. When Mr Skinner came up to him, Mr Skinner had called Mr Harris an “*absolute cheat*” and accused Mr Harris of ruining the game. Mr Skinner got very close to Mr Harris’s face. Mr Skinner had become virtually “*nose to nose*” with Mr Harris.
- iv. In the Veo you cannot see Mr Harris push anyone, you cannot actually see Mr Harris’s hands in the Veo footage.
- v. The person then came back at Mr Harris 2 or 3 times, maybe 4 times. Mr Harris was trying to get through to the person to just leave the pitch. This was unsuccessful.
- vi. Each time that the person came back the person was more aggressive each time with vocals that got louder.
- vii. Mr Harris did not believe that he himself acted aggressively at any point. He was trying to be firm but fair.
- viii. Mr Harris did not believe that he used any abusive language.
- ix. Mr Harris did not believe that he did anything that was threatening, only when he told the person to get out of his face – because punches had been thrown.
- x. He described his push against the person as being minimal, he was simply trying to form a barrier. The push was not forceful and certainly did not move anybody.

- xi. He accepted that he did push the person, this happened after the person had placed his own hands on Mr Harris.
- xii. He believed that he pushed by using his arm, at the same time that he told the person to “*please go away*”.
- xiii. He confirmed that at the time that he had shown a red card to the player, Mr Hall was definitely there because “*the guy with the flag was Mr Skinner*”.
- xiv. It was his belief that the person that took the cards from him was Mr Hall but this could be a mistake on his (Mr Harris’s part). He could definitely have made a mistake in believing that the person was Mr Hall because the situation was very volatile.
- xv. He recalled that at the time, Mr Hall and Mr Skinner were on the pitch in the incident and were side by side at this time.

Standard of Proof

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

The Findings & Decision

- 56. The Commission reminded itself that the burden of proving a charge falls upon the County FA, in this case it falls upon Sussex, FA, and Surrey FA respectively.
- 57. In a Commission such as this the assessment of the evidence is entirely a matter for the Commission. The Commission has to assess the credibility of the witness, that is whether the witness is attempting to tell the truth, and the reliability of the witness, that is whether, even though a witness may be attempting to tell the truth, their evidence might not be relied upon.
- 58. Where there are discrepancies between witnesses, it is for the Commission to accept

which witnesses to accept and which to reject. Even where there are discrepancies between witnesses or within a witness's own evidence, it is for the Commission to assess if the discrepancy is important. Having considered which evidence to accept and which to reject, the Commission then has to decide if, on the balance of probability, the alleged breach of the FA Rules is established.⁵

59. It should be noted that where direct speech is quoted in a witness statement, we have recorded it exactly in the wording and grammar in which it appears in the witness statement, without making any grammatical or typing alterations to obvious typo errors.

In summary:

Mr Jordan Hall's case: [Case ID: 11486267M]

60. Mr Hall is charged with Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3.1 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including physical contact or attempted physical contact and threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).
61. It is alleged that Jordan Hall used violent conduct and/or threatening and/or abusive and/or indecent and/or insulting language/behaviour 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 Hall entered the pitch, grabbed the referee's cards from his hand and threw them on the floor whilst saying "*you've got no cards now so the match is over*". It is further alleged that the manager refused to continue, resulting in the match being abandoned.
62. Mr Hall denied the charge.
63. The principal evidence provided in support of this charge came from the Stewart Harris, the Club Match Official in the fixture. Mr Harris is also a Participant charged in this case as counter allegations have been made by Mr Hall and Mr Harris against each other.

⁵ Paragraph 5

64. From all of the evidence available in this case, including the Written Submissions and the live Oral evidence provided by the witnesses attending the Hearing, the Commission is satisfied that Mr Harris did have his red card taken from his hand after he had shown the card to two players who he had sent off the pitch for an on-field incident.
65. It is evident to the Commission that the incident that had resulted in Mr Harris taking the action to show the red card to the players had resulted in a mass confrontation occurring involving multiple players and Officials from both teams.
66. It is during the mass confrontation that the red card was taken from Mr Harris's hand and thrown to the ground by a person who had entered the pitch without the permission of Mr Harris and this person had engaged themselves in direct verbal conflict with Mr Harris.
67. It was Mr Harris's belief that the person that had taken the card from him and thrown it on the ground was Mr Jordan Hall, a person who he identified as being the manager of Wakehams Green Football Club.
68. During the Hearing we heard live oral evidence from Harry Dalton. Mr Dalton was a player in the match. He is the Chair of Holland Sports FC, the same team that Mr Harris is with.
69. Whilst providing his live oral evidence, and without being asked about identification, Mr Dalton told us that the Participant appearing on the screen, namely Mr Hall, did not look like the manager that he saw take Mr Harris's cards and throw them on the ground during the confrontation that he had witnessed. He stated that he was clear that the manager that took and threw Mr Harris's cards was not Mr Hall.
70. Mr Dalton was clear, concise, and credible and believable whilst providing his oral evidence.
71. Andrew Sells was an Official of Holland Sports FC. He did not witness the incident involving the person taking the cards out of Mr Harris's hand. Mr Sells did witness the

person throwing the Linesman's flag to the ground. Whilst providing live oral evidence at the Hearing Mr Sells told the Hearing that the person that he saw throw the flag on the ground was not in attendance on the screen of the Hearing. This led the Commission to believe that what Mr Sells had seen in relation to the flag was not likely to be Mr Hall being the person that had carried out that act.

72. Mr Sells was clear, concise, credible, and believable whilst providing his oral evidence.

73. Leigh Iles was an Official of Holland Sports FC. He described the manager of Wakehams Green as wearing a hat at the match. He saw the manager take the cards from Mr Harris and throw them on the ground. He also saw the manager in possession of a Linesman's flag. He told us that the manager had not been the Linesman in the match. He told us that the manager that he had seen take and throw Mr Harris's cards was not Mr Hall.

74. Mr Iles was clear, concise, credible, and believable whilst providing his oral evidence.

75. The Commission were satisfied that the Misconduct threshold of the E3.1 Improper Conduct was met, as was the threshold for breach of FA Rule 96.2 Physical Conduct against a Match Official. The issue in this charge was the identity of the perpetrator.

76. There was very strong evidence, both individually and collectively, provided by the witnesses Mr Sells, Mr Dalton, and Mr Iles, to seriously doubt that it was Mr Hall who took the cards from Mr Harris and threw them on the ground.

77. We determined that all three witnesses, who were from the opposing team from Mr Hall were credible and believable. We considered that their evidence was evidence on which we could rely.

78. Luke Skinner provided evidence that we found to be inconsistent. His version of events was entirely at odds with the other witnesses in this case. We found Mr Skinner to be attempting to be forceful in the Hearing. He appeared and seemed to want to make his point against Mr Harris, essentially attempting to blame Mr Harris for what went wrong on the day.

79. Mr Hall identified Mr Skinner as being the person that actually took the cards from Mr Harris, before throwing the cards and the Linesman's flag on the ground. We did not consider Mr Skinner to be a credible or believable witness in this case. Rather, we formed the impression that Mr Skinner had actually tried to mislead the Commission with the oral evidence that he had provided at the Hearing.
80. In determining liability in this case, we were not persuaded by the County evidence. We preferred the defence evidence and determined that, on the balance of probability, Mr Hall had not used Improper Conduct against the Match Official as alleged in his charge.
81. Therefore, after careful consideration of all of the evidence in this case we determined that the E3.1 charge of Misconduct for breach of FA Rule E3.1 was **NOT PROVEN**.

Mr Stewart Harris's case: [Case ID: 11487204M]

82. Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3.1 – Improper Conduct (including violent conduct and/or threatening and/or abusive language /behaviour).
83. It is alleged that Stewart Harris has pushed the opposition Chairman following the end of the game, or similar.
84. Mr Harris denied the charge.
85. A mass confrontation occurred in this match after Mr Harris, the stand-in Club Referee attempted to send off two players following an on-field incident. A number of players, and Officials from both Clubs became involved in this capacity whilst attempting to restore order.
86. There is consistent and corroborating evidence that Mr Harris was being verbally abused by a person or persons associated with the Club Official's role/s from Wakehams Green Football Club.
87. Luke Skinner, the Chairman of Wakehams Green Football Club, entered the pitch and confronted Mr Harris about decisions that he was not happy to accept. It is apparent that verbal abuse was made by Mr Skinner towards Mr Harris.

88. Mr Harris, by his own admission admits that he pushed Mr Skinner because Mr Skinner had invaded his (Mr Harris's) personal space and had got too close with his physical presence.
89. Mr Harris, whilst denying the charge, does accept that he did push Mr Skinner with a minimal amount of force. With the explanation and admission made to us by Mr Harris, we considered his explanation of his actions to be mitigation and not a factor to affect determining liability in this case. This charge was, essentially, admitted by Mr Harris during his presentation of live oral evidence.
90. We therefore determined, after careful consideration of all of the evidence in this case that it was more likely than not that Mr Harris had used Improper conduct, including violent conduct and/or threatening and/or abusive language /behaviour, and we found the E3.1 charge **PROVEN**.

Verbal Plea Mitigation

Holland Sports FC's case [Case ID: 11486788M]

91. Holland Sports FC were charged with Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20 – Failed to ensure directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any Match.
92. It is alleged that Holland Sports failed to ensure that directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives attending any match do not behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting, or provocative contrary to FA Rule E20.1. This refers to the allegation that a mass confrontation took place which involved players from both clubs causing the abandonment of the game.
93. Holland Sports FC accepted the charge and entered a “**Guilty Plea**”.
94. The Club were represented at the Plea for Mitigation by Paul Kavanagh.

95. After hearing from Mr Cheosiaua, we were informed that the Club had 3 teams.

We were told that the Club had no previous breaches of FA Rule E20 recorded against it during the previous 5 years.

96. The Club had one recorded sanction in December 2021 for 4 or more violent conduct charges brought against it during the same Season. The Club were fined £100.00 for this.

97. Mr Kavanagh told the commission the following:

i. After explanation of the meaning of the charge Holland Sports FC now accept the charge.

ii. They had seen the video and it was apparent that some of their players were involved in the confrontation which led to the abandonment of the match.

iii. The Club were not the instigators of the confrontation. Some of their players had stepped in to try to calm the situation, not escalate the situation.

iv. None of the Clubs players on the side line had got involved.

v. Other people were trying to get at the referee and at one of their players.

vi. He apologised for the actions of his Club's players that had become involved in the confrontation.

vii. The Club conceded that the behaviour of some of its players on this occasion was not acceptable.

viii. The Club have taken internal action against some of the players involved. One player had been suspended from the team for the team's next 3 matches following the match in question.

ix. The Club did not want the match to be abandoned.

x. The Club tried hard to get the game going again.

98. As the Club had accepted its charge and entered a Guilty Plea in this case, we were not required to determine liability in his case. We found that the threshold of the charge had been met and that the Club were correct to plead Guilty to the charge. The Misconduct charge for breach of FA Rule E20 is **PROVEN**.

The Correspondence Case

Wakehams Green's Case: [Case ID: 11486274M]

99. Wakehams Green were charged with Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20 – Failed to ensure directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any Match.

100. It is alleged that that a mass confrontation took place which involved players from both clubs.

101. Wakehams Green accepted the charge.

102. As the Club had accepted the charge we were not required to determine liability in this case. We were satisfied that the charge threshold had been met and that Wakehams Green were correct to enter a Guilty Plea to their charge. The E20 charge is **PROVEN**.

Previous Disciplinary Record

103. Having found the E20 charge for Wakehams Green proven, we sought the Club's previous Disciplinary Record for the previous 5 years. Mr Cheosiaua informed us that the Club had one team and that the Club had no previous Sanctions for Misconduct recorded against it during the previous 5 years. We would consider this record to be a **Clean Record**.

Mitigation

104. The Club did not submit any formal Mitigation in this case. We would consider their early **Guilty Plea** and **Clean Record** as **Mitigation** when we determined the

appropriate Sporting Sanction to impose in this case.

The Sanction

Mr Stewart Harris's case: [Case ID: 11487204M]

105. The Commission reminded itself of the sanction range for Misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E3.1 – Improper Conduct (including violent conduct and threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour). The sanction range is a suspension from all football for a period of between 1-10 matches and a fine of between £20 - £125. The Commission were required to identify the sanction category that it placed the level of seriousness within, the options for the Commission was Low, Mid, or High.
106. After careful consideration of all of the facts in this case and particularly noting the high level of provocation that Mr Harris received from an Official of Wakehams Green, we placed the case in the **Low** category for determining the appropriate sanction.
107. Mr Cheosiaua confirmed to us that the Low category sanction range was a 1-3 match suspension and a fine ranging between £20-£50.
108. We did identify aggravating factors in this case. We considered that Mr Harris was acting as a Match Official at the time of this incident. He was also a Club Official and as such he would be seen as a role model by players within his Club.
109. There was clear mitigation in this case. Mr Harris was clearly the subject of extreme provocation by an Official or Officials of Wakehams Green Football Club. Mr Harris had a Clean Record.
110. After careful consideration of all of the facts in this case, and giving consideration to all of the aggravating and mitigating factors, we determined that the appropriate Sanction should be 3 matches suspension. Because Mr Harris was a non-playing Participant in this matter, and due to the factor that this breach was not committed whilst acting in any of his roles within the Football Club, this 3 match sanction will need to

be converted into days.⁶ This shall be converted into days by multiplying 3 matches by 7 (days in the week) which converts into 21 days. We determined that the appropriate Sanction is:

- i. Mr Stewart Harris shall receive a 21-day suspension from all football activity, this shall include refereeing.
- ii. Mr Stewart is fined £50.00 (Fifty Pounds).
- iii. The sanction is formally imposed.
- iv. The decision is subject to the right of appeal under the relevant FA Rules and Regulations.

Holland Sports FC's case [Case ID: 11486788M]

111. The Commission reminded itself of the Sanction Range available in respect of Misconduct for breach of FA Rule E20 for Teams playing outside of the National league System. The Sanction was a fine within the Sanction Range of between £0 and £300.00.

112. To determine the appropriate sanction level, we were required to select from a “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” category relating to the level of seriousness which we felt was appropriate in respect of this breach of Rule. We determined that the sanction should be placed in the “**High**” category due to the level of disorder that took place and the fact that the game was abandoned.

113. We would enter the High Sanction Range at £140.00 due to the fact that the game was abandoned. We identified the Club's previous Misconduct Record with having 4 or more charges of violent conduct recorded against it within the same Season to be **an aggravating factor** and we would add £25.00 to the entry point of £140.00 due to their **Previous Disciplinary Record**. This would increase the fine to £165.00 prior to considering Mitigating factors in this case. We noted that the Club did accept the charge at the Hearing, having initially denied the charge. We could not allow credit for **early Guilty Plea**, however we would allow a degree of credit for **Guilty Plea**. We would allow a discount of £40.00 for Guilty Plea. This would reduce the Sanction to

⁶ Paragraph 181 of the FA Handbook 2023/2024

£125.00. We also noted that the Club were not the aggressors in this case and we would allow a discount of £20.00 having noted this. This would reduce the sanction to £105.00. Finally, we noted that the Club had apologised for the actions of their players that had been involved in this case and had taken internal action against those responsible. This internal action had included suspending a player or players from within the Club. We would allow a discount of a further £20.00 in recognition of the apology received and the internal action taken by the Club. This would reduce the final sanction total to £85.00.

114. Therefore, after careful consideration of all of the Aggravating and Mitigating factors in this case, we determined that the appropriate Sporting Sanction is:

- i. Holland Sports FC are fined £85.00 (Eighty-Five Pounds).
- ii. Holland Sports FC are formally warned as to their future conduct.
- iii. The Sanction is formally imposed.
- iv. The decision is subject to the right of appeal under the relevant FA Rules and Regulations.

Wakehams Green's case [Case ID: 11486274M]

115. The Commission reminded itself of the Sanction Range available in respect of Misconduct for breach of FA Rule E20 for Teams playing outside of the National league System. The Sanction was a fine within the Sanction Range of between £0 and £300.00.

116. To determine the appropriate sanction level, we were required to select from a “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” category relating to the level of seriousness which we felt was appropriate in respect of this breach of Rule. We determined that the sanction should be placed in the “**High**” category due to the level of disorder that took place and the fact that the game was abandoned. We noted that there was evidence within the bundle showing that a Wakehams Green player had been involved in throwing a punch which appears to have been a catalyst for the disorder that followed in this matter. Further, the player had run onto the pitch to become involved as he was a

substitute in the game and was not even on the pitch as a player when he chose to enter the field of play and become involved in disorderly and violent conduct.

117. We would enter the sanction High Sanction Range at £140.00 due to the fact that this was serious disorder that the Club's players and Official/s became involved in. We considered that the Wakehams Green player that entered the pitch to become involved in violent conduct was an aggravating factor as he was an unused substitute in the game at the time that he involved himself. We would add £40.00 for this **aggravating factor**. The same player then threw a punch at an opponent and without doubt the player's actions escalated the situation. We would add a further £40.00 for this **aggravating factor**. This would increase the total to £220.00 before considering the mitigating factors in this case. We would allow approximately one third discount for the early Guilty Plea that was entered by the Club. This would reduce the sanction total by £70.00 bringing the total down to £150.00. We would allow a discount of £20.00 for the Club's Clean Record, this would reduce the sanction total to £130.00. We noted that the Club had shown remorse in its Written Submissions and a further credit of £15.00 would be allowed for this, this would reduce the overall sanction to £115.00.

118. Therefore, after careful consideration of all of the Aggravating and Mitigating factors in this case, we determined that the appropriate Sporting Sanction is:

- i. Wakehams Green are fined £115.00 (One hundred and fifteen Pounds).
- ii. Wakehams Green are formally warned as to their future conduct.
- iii. The Sanction is formally imposed.
- iv. The decision is subject to the right of appeal under the relevant FA Rules and Regulations.

Signed.....

Mr Ian R. Stephenson (Commission Chair)

Mr Minesh Gupta

Mrs Shan Jaehrig

18th December 2023.

