

**Disciplinary Commission ("The Commission")**  
**On behalf of Surrey FA**  
**In the matter of Michael George - Case ID: 11107541M**  
**Hearing Summary including Written Reasons**

The Commission

1. This is the hearing summary and the written reasons for the decision of the Disciplinary Commission which convened on-line on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to consider the above matter.
2. Nick Leale (Chairman), Jane Hodge and Kristian Jones were the Commission members appointed by the FA to consider the case. Ravel Cheosiaua of Worcestershire FA was appointed by the FA as Commission Secretary.

The charges

3. Michael George was charged by Surrey FA in respect of the following matter:  
Charge 1: FA Rule E3 - Improper Conduct against a match official (including threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).  
The charges followed the alleged misconduct of Michael George (of Kingswood Town U13 FC) during a match between Kingswood Town U13 FC and Leatherhead Youth U13 FC on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

Key background facts and evidence

4. The following is a summary of the key submissions provided to the Commission. It does not contain reference to all the points or submissions made and the absence of any point does not mean that it has not been considered.
5. For the avoidance of doubt, the Commission carefully considered all the live evidence and written materials in respect of this case.
6. Surrey FA had received an incident report from the match referee Harry Hare (aged 14) on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2023.
7. It was alleged that Michael George, who had acted as assistant referee during the relevant match, on the final whistle approached the referee Harry Hare (aged 14) and :
  - criticised his officiating of the match;
  - threw the assistant referee's flag at him;
  - squared up to him.
8. On 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, Surrey FA informed Mr George's club of the misconduct charge being brought against him, as outlined above.
9. Mr George originally admitted the charge but at an earlier listed hearing it became clear that Mr George did not accept that he acted in a way that was threatening towards the referee. He therefore changed his position to denial of the charge brought by Surrey FA and the matter was listed for a full personal hearing.

### Summary of further relevant evidence

10. The written evidence considered by the Commission included:

- Statement of match referee Harry Hare.
- Statement of Leatherhead U13 manager Ryan Abdool – who stated that at the end of the game he saw Harry Hare picking up a flag who then said to Ryan that Mr George had thrown the flag at him and made disparaging remarks about his refereeing.
- Statement of Samantha Abdool (spectator) – who stated that she saw Mr George move towards Harry Hare at the end of the game and noticed that Harry was visibly upset when he was escorted to the clubhouse.
- Statement of Ben Beevers (spectator) – who stated that he heard aggressive words from Mr George towards Harry and saw the flag on the floor.
- Statement of Graham Reed (spectator) – who stated that Harry did not control the game well and was critical of his appointment to referee the match.
- Statement of Michael George.

11. The Commission heard oral evidence from:

- Harry Hare (with his father Daniel present as an appropriate adult) - who said that Mr George, at the end of the game, came up to him and told him that he had made awful decisions during the game and that he had generally officiated the game badly. He threw the flag towards him and it made contact with the lower part of his body. Mr George then squared up to him by broadening his chest at him. Harry said that he said to Mr George that he was sorry and that he was only 14 years old. Harry stated that he had felt alarmed and scared at the time.

- Michael George - who said that he was unaware, until he was told, that Harry was a youth and that throughout the game there had been little acceptance of him as the assistant referee. He accepted that he had 'tossed' the flag at Harry at the end of the game but denied making disparaging remarks to him about his refereeing or squaring up him/threatening him in any way.

#### Decisions and reasons

12. The Commission carefully considered all of the written and oral evidence provided.

13. The burden of proof rests with the County FA.

14. The standard of proof is the civil standard, the balance of probability. In simple terms, the Commission has to be satisfied, on the evidence, that it was more likely than not that an event had occurred.

15. The Commission unanimously found the charge proved. The Commission was satisfied that Mr George had thrown the flag towards Harry (Mr George had admitted this) and that the sequence of events was of a threatening nature towards Harry, particularly given his age.

16. The Commission's Secretary advised that Mr George's disciplinary record showed no previous misconduct matters. In mitigation Mr George apologised for his conduct and accepted that it was 'stupid' to toss the flag at Harry. He stated that he had completed significant learning on the FA website since the events in question including a course on safeguarding awareness.

17. The Commission imposed the following sanctions in respect of this matter:

- 140 days suspension from all football and all football activities, increased from the entry point of 112 days by 8 weeks due to the aggravating factors of the referee being 14 years of age and the match being an U13's fixture and then reduced by 4 weeks for Mr George's admission that he 'tossed' the flag and his remorse as outlined in the summary of mitigation above;
- The above suspension to include an all football grounds/venue ban for the period;
- a fine of £75;
- A requirement to complete an F.A. approved on-line education course prior to completion of the suspension. If he fails to do so within that timescale he is to

be suspended from all footballing activity until such time as he is in compliance with this order. Details of the course will be provided to him.

18. This decision is subject to the right of appeal under the relevant FA Rules and Regulations.

Nick Leale (Chairman)

Kristian Jones

Jane Hodge

20<sup>th</sup> March 2023