

IN THE MATTER OF A FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION

BETWEEN:

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

and

MR JOHN SHERIDAN

WRITTEN REASONS AND DECISION OF
THE INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE
HEARING
ON 20 DECEMBER 2016

Background

1. These are the written reasons for a decision made by an Independent Regulatory Commission which sat by WebEx on 20 December 2016.
2. The Regulatory Commission members were Mr G Farrelly, Chairman, Mr K Monkou and Mr M Kearns.
3. Mr P McCormack of the FA Judicial Services Department acted as Secretary to the Regulatory Commission.
4. By letter dated 13 December 2016, The Football Association (“The FA”) charged Mr John Sheridan with Misconduct for three breaches of FA Rule E3 in respect of the fixture between Notts County FC v Wycombe Wanderers FC.
5. It was alleged that in or around the 56th minute of the fixture in question, Mr Sheridan used abusive and/or insulting words towards the Fourth Official. It was further alleged that following his dismissal from the technical area he used abusive and/or insulting words towards the Match Referee and abusive and/or insulting and/or threatening words towards the Fourth Official.
6. The FA designated this as a Non Standard Case due to the repetitive and aggressive nature of the reported behaviour.
7. In the Extraordinary Incident Report Form the Referee, Eddie Ilderton stated –

“In the 55th minute 4th Official Matthew Donohue informed me that Notts County manager John Sheridan should be removed from the technical area for his behaviour towards himself. I then asked Mr Sheridan to leave the technical area, and take a place in the stands. Mr Sheridan then said to me “You’re a fucking disgrace, you’re fucking useless, you’ve not fucking got anything right today, you should be fucking ashamed, you’re fucking shit, my kids aren’t going to get any fucking Christmas presents because of fucking you” Mr Sheridan then took his place in the stands for the rest of the game”.

8. This was further supported by Mr Donohue in his Extraordinary Incident where he stated that –

“In the 56th minute, after Wycombe Wanderers had scored their second goal, Notts County manager, John Sheridan and assistant manager, Mark Crossley left the technical to complain to assistant referee, Anthony Moore. I approached them to tell them they needed to remain in their technical area. Mr Sheridan then shouted directly into my face, “You’re a fucking cunt. A cunt”.

I then called across referee Eddie Ilderton, who dismissed Mr Sheridan from the technical area. On leaving the technical area, Mr Sheridan approached me again, shouting directly at me, “You really are a cunt. I’m gonna knock you out you cunt”.

9. For completeness, the other Assistant Referee was not in a position to hear what was said.
10. The Charge was admitted on 15 December 2016.
11. Mr Sheridan did not request a personal hearing and the case was dealt with on the papers only.
12. Mr Sheridan submitted a letter apologising unreservedly for his actions. The Regulatory Commission were informed of one previous sanction imposed on Mr Sheridan for a breach of Rule E3 which occurred on 21 March 2015. This was whilst he was manager of Plymouth Argyle in a fixture v Newport County FC.
13. The Regulatory Commission considered all of the evidence presented and ruled there to be a number of critical points. It is accepted that Match Officials at all levels have a difficult role as do football managers. However, there is no place for the foul and abusive language as used in this case nor the aggressive threatening words as used. This is further aggravated by the duration of the incident and the fact that Mr Sheridan went out of his way to further abuse the Fourth Official with what can best be described as vulgar language. There is simply no justification for this behaviour.
14. Due to the serious nature of the breaches the Regulatory Commission were minded to impose a higher sanction but credit was given on both suspension and financial penalties for admittance to the charge and the mitigation put forward by Mr Sheridan.

Conclusion

15. The Regulatory Commission came to a unanimous decision, having carefully considered all of the evidence, and have imposed the following sanction on Mr Sheridan:
 - (i) He is given an immediate touchline suspension until Notts County FC completed five (5) first team competitive matches in approved competitions; and
 - (ii) Fined the sum of £2,500.
16. This decision is subject to the relevant Appeal Regulations.

Gareth Farrelly, Chairman

Ken Monkou

Mick Kearns

20 December 2016