

**IN THE MATTER OF FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION DISCIPLINARY
PROCEEDINGS**

BETWEEN:

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

-and-

THE CONSOLIDATED CASES OF READING FC & SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY FC

**WRITTEN REASONS OF THE
REGULATORY COMMISSION**

1. By charge letters dated 14 December 2016, Reading FC and Sheffield Wednesday FC were charged with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20 (a) in respect of an incident in the English Football League Championship fixture on 10 December 2016 between the two teams. It was alleged that in or around the 77th minute of the fixture, each club failed to ensure that its players conducted themselves in an orderly fashion and/or refrained from provocative behaviour.
2. A non-personal hearing was held at Wembley Stadium on 21 December 2016. The Commission consisted of Ifeanyi Odogwu (Chairman), Alan Knight MBE (Independent Football Panel Member), and Marvin Robinson (Independent Football Panel Member). The Secretary to the Commission was Mark Ives, Head of The FA Judicial Services. The case was considered as a ‘Non-Standard’ case.

Background

3. On 10 December 2016, Reading FC played Sheffield Wednesday FC in a Football League Championship fixture. After the match a Referee Assessor, Mike Tingey, sent an Extraordinary Incident Report to The FA recording that,

“At 77:35 during the above game, a mass confrontation involving approximately 14 players occurred, following which the Referee issued cautions to 4 players; SW33 for the initial reckless foul tackle, then SW and R5 for adopting aggressive attitude and

also SW39 who entered the field of play without permissions whilst in the capacity of an unused substitute.

I invite the Football Association to review footage of the incident and, in particular, would highlight the conduct of R18 as the initial retaliator and the SE Goalkeeper who ran from distance and became aggressively involved with several opponents”

4. On 11 December 2016, the FA received a further Extraordinary Incident Report statement from the match Referee, Tony Harrington. In that report, he included:

“In the 77th minute of this fixture there was a coming together of at least 14 players with a mix of both teams payers. Disciplinary action was taken against Sheffield Wednesday number 33 (reckless tackle), 12 (adopting aggressive attitude) and 39 (an unused sub who entered the field of play without permission to be involved in the altercation) whilst action was taken against Reading 5 (adopting aggressive attitude). Please review to assess team behaviour and if there are any further acts of misconduct.”

5. The incident was also captured by video footage, which was available to the Commission.
6. On 16 December 2016, Sheffield Wednesday FC admitted the charge and requested a correspondence case. On 19 December 2016, Reading FC also admitted the charge and requested a correspondence case. Both clubs submitted mitigation, which the Commission were able to consider in relation to appropriate sanction.

Sanction

7. Standard Penalty Guidelines for an admitted charge relating to a club at Championship level would be a £5,000 fine. As a Non-Standard charge, the Commission had a complete discretion on sanction for both teams.
8. The Commission were made aware of both clubs’ record for the past five seasons.

- (1) Reading FC had three proven FA Rule E20 charges for failing to control players on their record; they were fined £40,000 in February 2011, £100,000 fine in March 2015, and £5,000 in August 2016.
- (2) Sheffield Wednesday had four proven FA Rule E20 charges for failing to control players on their record and an additional two multiplayer misconduct charges; They were fined £2,500 in December 2011 for multiplayer misconduct, £5,000 for failing to control players in December 2012, £5,000 in April 2015 for multiplayer misconduct, £10,000 for failing to control players in January 2014, £7,000 for failing to control players in December 2015, and £10,000 for failing to control players in February 2016.
9. In considering the actual incident in isolation by watching the video footage, and carefully considering the representations made by both clubs, the Commission accept the submissions from both teams that the match referee's mishandling of the passage of play contributed to the mass confrontation. It is also apparent that the referee had regained control and order was restored within approximately 20 seconds.
10. However, the Commission considered on balance that both clubs were equally culpable as each other. Both sets of players travelled distances across the pitch to come together. While there were a few players acting as peacemakers, a large number of players from both teams appear to behave aggressively towards the opposition.
11. Both clubs have an equally poor disciplinary record regarding controlling player behaviour. While Sheffield Wednesday FC has had more disciplinary charges, Reading FC's breaches have been more serious.
12. Due to our findings on culpability, and the clubs' respective records, the Commission considered that this was an appropriate case to apportion the same sanction to both sets of clubs.

13. The Commission order against Reading FC and Sheffield Wednesday FC, which is unanimously considered fair and proportionate, is a fine in the sum of £15,000 each which incorporates credit to both clubs for their admittance. Both clubs were also warned as to their future conduct.
14. This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the relevant regulations within The FA Handbook.

Ifeanyi Odogwu (Chairman),
Alan Knight MBE
Marvin Robinson

23 December 2016