

Disciplinary Commission (“The Commission”)
On behalf of Berks and Bucks FA
In the matter of Mr Carl Stokes
(Case number 9753268M)
Hearing Summary including Written Reasons

1. This is a hearing summary and includes written reasons for the decision of the Disciplinary Commission (The Commission) which sat by means of WebEx on Tuesday 9th April 2019.
2. The FA appointed Mr. Keith Allen (Member of the FA National Anti-Discrimination Chairs’ Panel) as Chair, Mr Robert Anthony (Member of the FA National Anti-Discrimination Chairs’ Panel) and Mr Nick Leale (Member of the FA National Anti-Discrimination Chairs’ Panel) were appointed as wing members. Ms Vicky Collins, Staffordshire FA, was appointed by the FA as Commission Secretary.
3. The following is a record of the salient points which the Commission considered, it is not intended to be and should not be taken to be, a verbatim record of the hearing.
4. Following social media posts published on the Castlethorpe Rovers FC (CRFC) Facebook page Berks & Bucks FA raised charges against Carl Stokes (CS) on the 15/02/2019, as follows: -

CARL STOKES (60357194)

Charge 1: FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct (including foul and abusive language)

Details; It was deemed that the comments made constitute improper conduct for the use of foul and abusive language.

It was further deemed that the comments were considered “aggravated” within the meaning of Rule E3 (2), due to reference, whether explicit or implied, to protested characteristics.

Charge 2; FA rule E3 (2) - Improper conduct-aggravated by a person’s Ethnic Origin, Colour, Race, Nationality, Faith, Gender, Sexual Orientation or Disability.

5. CS was advised that should the Regulatory Commission find an “Aggravated Breach” of rule E3(1) proven then the Commission shall consider the imposition of an increased sanction, as set out at FA Rule E3(2) at p 116-117 of the current FA hand book. “Minimum sanction of 5 matches, £75 fine and completion of an FA education course.
6. The player entered a guilty plea to both charges, to be dealt with in his absence with any correspondence submitted to be considered by the Disciplinary Commission.

- 7.** The Commission had before them evidence and/or statements of mitigation from:
 - Facebook posts of a match report posted on 6th January 2019 following a game between CRFC and Clean Slate FC.
 - Correspondence with CRFC.
 - Statements from Chris Ball, Clean Slate FC.
 - Statements from Carl Stokes.
- 8.** The Commission considered all the statements and evidence before them finding: -
 - The posts had originally been made on a closed CRFC closed WhatsApp site by an unidentified author.
 - By his own admission CS posted this report on the CRFC open Facebook site on 6th January 2019 and that he administers this site separate from the Club.
 - If the match report had only been posted in the CRFC closed WhatsApp group, a charge could still have been raised against the author and/or the Club.
 - On a number of occasions CS also cut and pasted match reports of CRFC games, without complaint or incident.
 - CS is unaware of the author of the match report.
 - CS has subsequently resigned his position within CRFC and once the content of the report had been brought to his attention, he immediately removed the post from the CRFC Facebook page.
 - CS has personally apologised to a number of players and officials of Clean Slate FC, which were accepted.
 - CRFC have now put in place procedures where they review and agree any information put in the public domain.
 - Clean Slate FC had gone to considerable lengths to say that no offence had been taken, that CRFC were valued opponents with whom they had never had any problem and that they would like no action to be taken.
 - CRFC stated that the match reports are always meant to be humorous and exaggerated take on the game, being confident the intention was not to cause offence or harm to anyone.
 - CRFC and CS have apologised and express considerable regret that this has occurred.
- 9.** The Secretary gave the Commission Mr Stokes' full disciplinary record over the last five years, which was good.

10. The Commission considered the words used in the Facebook match report and Mr Stokes' good record, before unanimously deciding to impose:

- i) A sanction at the entry level for an E3(2) charge, of a five match suspension.**
- ii) A £75 fine,**
- iii) Attendance at an on line education workshop within the next four months to the satisfaction of the FA or will result in suspension from all football until so done.**
- iv) Five penalty points to the Club record.**

11. There is a right of appeal against these decisions in accordance with the relevant provisions set out in the Rules and Regulations of the Football Association.

Keith Allen (Chairman)

Robert Anthony

Nick Leare

Tuesday 9th January 2019