DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

On behalf of the Essex County Football Association

Correspondence Hearings

of

CONNOR CROSBY
SOUTH ESSEX UNITED
Case ID: 9680615

THE DECISION AND REASONS OF THE COMMISSION

Warning: This document may contain offensive language.

Introduction

1. On 24th November 2018 South Essex United FC played in a match against Harold Wood Athletic FC in the Mid Essex League Knock Out Cup.

2. A report was forwarded to Essex County Football Association ("Essex FA") by the match referee, Nathan Kitteridge. This contained allegations of misconduct by Connor Crosby

3. Essex FA commenced an investigation into the allegations and raised charges

The Charges

4. Connor Crosby was charged under FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including threatening and/or abusive behaviour after the match had ended)

5. The details of the charge against Connor Crosby were contained in the charge letter ""As I walked to the dressing room Mr Conor Crosby approached me questioning his dismissal. he said "you got me a three match ban for nothing" I replied explaining that he had received 2 cautions for the incidents correctly therefore had to be dismissed. he the stated that "the first one was even a booking" to which I explained it was and that I was ending the conversation there as it was not going anywhere. Mr Crosby continued to follow me to the dressing room and stated "id love to smash your face in you mop hair cunt." he then also stated "you best hope you don't bump into me in the street". At this point I reached my dressing room door so I entered, collected my kit bag and clothes and left immediately as I did not feel I could guarantee my safety following the abuse I received."

6. The relevant section of FA Rule E3 states: Offences against Match Officials:-
"A Participant shall at all times act in the best interest of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or a combination of violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour."

Documentation

7. Essex FA included within the charge letter the following evidence they intended to rely on:
   (i) Statements from the match official
   (ii) A statement from David O'Donnell (Secretary – South Essex United)

The Reply

8. Connor Crosby responded to the charge pleading not guilty

The Commission

9. The Discipline Commission members appointed by the Essex County Football Association were:
   Mr Wayne Deller (Chairman)
   Mr David Emerton (Essex FA Council Member)
   Mr Michael Kay (Independent)

10. Mr Greg Hart , of the Essex FA Governance Team, acted as Secretary to the Commission

11. The Commission took place at Essex County Football Association headquarters on 4th March 2019, commencing at 8.40pm and finishing shortly after 9.00pm

12. The Commission had received no additional documents prior to the hearing.

13. The statement from Mr. O'Donnell (on behalf of Connor Crosby) was also considered by the Commission Mr. O'Donnell stated In response to the charge brought against Conor Crosby in the fixture versus Harold Wood, Conor has asked me to provide this response: Conor on a number of occasions had spoken to the referee regarding the linesman because he constantly flagged our players offside. He told the referee that he needed to get a grip of the game and to speak to the linesman. I heard this conversation and I could see that the referee did not like being told how to officiate. Conor told the referee that he would be responsible for us losing the game if he did not intervene, this was a game that we dominated for 90 minutes. The referee refused to acknowledge anything that Conor had been saying. Instead Conor on his next challenge received a yellow card! Conor had made a fair challenge, won the ball and had made no contact whatsoever with his opponent. The opponent could not believe a yellow had been issued. Conor told the referee that he was being unfair as it was a perfectly good challenge and yet again the referee refused to acknowledge him. The game restarted after the free kick and Conor made a run to the other side of the pitch to again make a challenge, this time taking the ball from the side. This time contact was made with the player but Conor, myself or anyone else participating or watching could not see it as a yellow card yet the referee produced a 2nd yellow and subsequently sent Conor off. Conor had made 2 tackles after he first spoke to the referee regarding the linesman and was given a yellow on both occasions. This seemed to me to be the referees best opportunity to get Conor off his back. At no point during the game did Conor swear or argue forcefully with the referee even after he had been red carded, he merely pointed out that the referee had got it wrong. When the game ended Conor approached the referee and said to him that he had now got him a 3 game ban purely because he wasn't happy with Conor making judgement on his officiating and nothing to do with the tackles. The referee told him to go away and would not enter into a conversation with him even though Conor was perfectly calm. Conor asked him why he had been treated so unfairly and again the referee rudely responded by telling him to go away, Conor then told the referee that he would not be that rude to him in the street, this was by no means a threat just simply stating that as he was a referee officiating over a match he felt he could talk to him anyway he wanted. The referee and Conor then entered the building and the matter ended. Conor has stated that he did not insult the referee.

14. The match official had been clear in his original misconduct report and had received no additional requests from the ECFA for details and clarity.

Standard of Proof

15. The Commission reminded itself that the burden of proving a charge falls upon the County FA.

16. The applicable standard of proof required for this case is the civil standard of proof namely, 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.

Findings

17. From the documentation that we read there was no doubt that there was a confrontation between the match official and Connor Crosby.

18. Having carefully considered such documentation as had been submitted the Commission members: Unanimously concluded that the charge against Connor Crosby under FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including threatening and/or abusive behaviour after the match had ended) was proven

19. The Commission determined that the level of sanction was to be in the Mid-range due to the fact that there were repeated instances of threat and abuse of the referee and that the referee had been the subject of a clear threat to cause physical harm and further that after being sent away Connor Crosby had continued his threats and abuse on a further occasion.

20. The Commission were satisfied that the nature of the verbal threats was so specific that it was more likely than not to have been uttered.

21. **Sanction**

22. The Commission considered the relevant rules and The FA's Sanction Guidelines for Season 2017/18. In relation to these cases this was a minimum sanction of a 112 days and a fine of up to £100.00

23. The Commission carefully considered the previous record of Connor Crosby, in mitigation, and noted that he had received seventeen cautions and one dismissal in the past five years and had a further aggravated charge from the current season pending.

24. The Commission further noted that there had been a clear and repeated threat to cause physical harm

25. The Commission unanimously agreed that there was insufficient reason to mitigate the recommended sanction and determined that Connor Crosby receive a 12 match ground ban a fine of £100.00

26. The decision of the Commission is subject to the right of appeal under the relevant Rules and Regulations of the Football Association.

Signed
Wayne A Deller

Mr Wayne Deller (Chairman)
Mr. David Emerton
Mr. Michael Kay
Wednesday 06.03.2019