

Disciplinary Commission (“The Commission”)
On behalf of Gloucestershire Football Association (Glos. FA)
In the matter of
DOWNEND SAINTS YOUTH FC - Case ID: 10507985M

Hearing Summary including Written Reasons

1. This is a hearing summary and includes written reasons for the decision of the Disciplinary Commission which sat on Saturday 16th October 2021.

2. Glos. FA had raised a charge against Downend Saints Youth FC as follows:-

Charge: FA Rule E20 – Failed to ensure Players and/or Officials and/or Spectators conducted themselves in an orderly fashion.

The charge was detailed as follows:

“Details: It is alleged that Downend Saints Youth FC failed to ensure spectator(s) and/or all persons purporting to be its supporter(s) or follower(s) conducted themselves in an orderly fashion...contrary to FA Rule E20. This refers to the allegation that spectators made insulting and threatening comments to Match Referee, Kevin Slade, after the end of the match; “couldn’t hide behind the black shirt”, “you were rubbish ref”, “don’t try to be fucking clever”, “don’t be so fucking stupid”, “...a frigging idiot”...” (sic)

The charge had been raised following the alleged language and behaviour of a spectator or spectators during the match between Avon Athletic U15 Colts (Avon) and Downend Saints Youth U15 (Downend) played on Sunday 12th September 2021 in the Avon Youth League U15 Division 1.

3. Glos. FA received a detailed report for the match referee, Mr. Kevin Slade, in which he provided details of alleged abusive language and behaviour directed at him both during and after the match by one or more Downend spectators. In that report he said, “...(he) approached me from behind and said I’d better watch my back. He said I didn’t know him, shouldn’t hide behind my shirt and I should never call him by his name. He repeated...I couldn’t hide behind the black shirt and needed to go careful...I felt threatened and it was clearly designed to intimidate me...I carried on walking. He came closer and was now within a foot of me, we were now just outside the car park and he said “don’t try to be fucking clever”, he got closer again and repeated his comment...and said quietly that he knows who I am and that I needed to watch myself...Once again he repeated his threat that I needed to watch my back...By now he was right next to me, practically touching me and his manner was even more threatening. I genuinely felt that his threats were real and that his demeanour and way he was talking made me feel very threatened for my immediate safety...” (sic)

4. At a result of that report the charge against Downend was raised by Glos. FA on 29th September 2021.
5. An on-line response to the charge was received from Downend in which it entered a plea of “*Accept – Correspondence*” indicating it was content for the matter to be dealt with in its absence. No further response to the charge was received from it.
6. The foregoing is a summary of the principal submissions provided to the Commission. It does not purport to contain reference to all the points made, however the absence in these reasons of any particular point, or submission, should not imply that the Commission did not take such point, or submission, into consideration when the member determined the matter. For the avoidance of doubt, the Commission carefully considered all the evidence and materials furnished with regard to this case.
7. As Downend had accepted the charge raised against it the Commission was only concerned with determining the sanction to be imposed. For clarity it should be noted however that, after considering all the evidence, the Commission was content to accept that plea from it.
8. The matter was determined to lie within the “*high*” category of offence. Downend’s disciplinary record over the last 5 years was then considered, which showed it had 20 teams and there was one previous proven E20 charge recorded against it. Reference was made to FA Rules E20, E21 and the Disciplinary Sanctions Guidelines issued by the FA in coming to its decision. It was noted that the recommended sanction for “*high*” category breach by a youth club was a fine of from £60 to £100.
9. The Commission considered if there were any relevant mitigating or aggravating factors. It found mitigating factors in its early “*guilty*” plea and its disciplinary record. It found aggravating factors in the fact that the referee had received abusive comments throughout the match, did not appear to have been supported by Downend officials, had clearly felt threatened and the incidents had taken place in front of young players playing in an U15 match. It was also disappointing that the club, in responding to the charge, had offered no apology for its supporters’ behaviour towards the referee or had indicated what action it intended to take to avoid such circumstances occurring in the future.
10. Having taken into consideration all the circumstances of the matter it was determined that the following sanction be imposed on Downend :-
 - a fine of £80;
 - 7 disciplinary penalty points.

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

T. Edwards, Chairman

16th October 2021