

**IN THE MATTER OF THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION  
DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION BETWEEN**

**Case ID: 11537355M**

**OXFORDSHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

And

**EDWARD KNIGHT**

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**DECISION AND REASONS**

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**Warning to the reader of this document. This document contains reference to alleged offensive and/or discriminatory language or behaviour.**

**Introduction**

1. These are the written reasons of Katherine Southby ("Chair" or the "Commission"), having considered the matter on the papers as Chair alone on a Non-Personal Hearing basis.

2. These written reasons obtain a summary of the principal evidence before the Chair and does not purport to contain reference to all points made. The absence in these reasons of any particular point, piece of evidence or submission should not imply that the Chair did not take such point, piece of evidence or submission into consideration when determining the matter. For the avoidance of doubt, the Chair has carefully considered all the evidence and materials provided in this matter.

**The Charges**

3. By a Misconduct Charge Notification dated 5 January 2024 (the "Charge Notification") issued by the Oxfordshire FA, alleged that Edward Knight ("EK") during a match ("the match") between Kingham All Blacks Reserves v Bampton United Reserves on 11 November 2023 engaged in improper conduct.

*"Details: It is alleged that Edward Knight used abusive and/or indecent and/or insulting language contrary to FA Rule E3.1, and it is further alleged that this is an aggravated breach as defined by FA Rule E3.2 because it includes a reference to race/colour and/or nationality. This refers to the comments "why are you even here" and/or "where are you from" and/or "what's that stupid accent, do you think you're Jamaican or something" and/or "stop trying to be Jamaican or similar. Its further alleged that Mr Knight mocked the opposing players voice."*

4. Accordingly, Oxfordshire FA charges EK with:

- i. Improper Conduct (including foul and abusive language) contrary to rule E3.1 of the Rules of the Football Association

- ii. Improper Conduct - aggravated by a persons Ethnic Origin, Colour, Race, Nationality, Faith, Gender, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation or Disability contrary to FA Rule E3.2

5. The Commission notes that the Rules state as follows

E3.1 A Participant shall at all times act in the best interests 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.

E3.2 A breach of Rule E3.1 is an "Aggravated breach" where it includes a reference, whether expressed or implied, to any one or more of the following: ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability.

6.EK was required to submit a response to the charge by 19 January 2024. A response was received which denies both charges and requests that the matter be dealt with by way of a Non-Personal Hearing.

### **Evidence**

7. As referred to above, the following is a summary of the principal evidence only. Where the written statements provided to the Commission contain typographical and/or grammatical errors, they have been recorded as drafted, without correction, to provide a true and accurate reflection of the evidence which has been submitted.

*Damian Corbin ("DC") – Player Kingham All Blacks*

8. DC states *"The guy just was like "where you from" and start talking like he from Jamaica and saying "you int from around here"..."*

*Dale Norris ("DN") - Player Kingham All Blacks*

9. DN refers to another separate altercation between players which he diffused, and a separate altercation between Kingham's number 10 and Bampton's number 14 (EK). DN states *"Initially it started with typical verbal sparring, but it escalated when the language used turned more offensive. The derogatory comments from the Bampton player were particularly hurtful, questioning the presence of the other player and mocking their accent which he often mimicked. Two of the phrases which he used which I can remember were 'why are you even here' 'What's that stupid accent? Do you think you're Jamaican or something?'...For clarification, our number 10 Damian "Tony" Corbin hails from Barbados."*

*Josh Silvester ("JS") - Player Kingham All Blacks*

10. JS states *"14 said about Damian "going back home" and kept saying "stop trying to be Jamaican" and constantly kept mocking his voice."*

*Isobel Hancock ("IH") – Club Chair Bampton United*

11. IH states that she was not at the game. She arranged for statements to be provided.

*Edward Knight ("EK") – Respondent and Player Bampton United*

12. EK confirms he was hearing the number 14 shirt and refers to some previous challenges and a confrontation between both sets of players including some unpleasant language concerning his late mother which he states was used against him by the opposition number 10 (DC"). He states *"I reacted back verbally saying your bang out of order my mother has passed away and called him a pussy"*

*Sean Siddons ("SS") – Player Bampton United*

13. SS states that the opposition number 10 made abusive comments concerning his and EK's Mums. He apologises for his own actions and that of his teammate.

*Arron Mullis ("AM") – Reserves Manager Bampton United*

14. AM states that there were verbal exchanges between the opposition number 10 earlier in the game, following which *"I saw Kinghams number 10 and one of our players squaring up to each other...I didn't see any physical violence, nor did I hear any racism. But I did over hear Kinghams number 10 say something about someone's mum."*

**Liability**

15. The Commission reminded itself that the burden of proving a charge falls upon Oxfordshire FA to prove the alleged misconduct upon the balance of probability.

16. The test to be applied is that the Commission is satisfied an event occurred if the Commission considers that, on the evidence, the occurrence of the event was more likely than not.

17. The Commission noted that the misconduct alleged is a serious assertion and cogent evidence is required upon the balance of probability to establish that allegation.

18. Having considered the evidence before the Commission, the Commission concluded as follows upon the balance of probability:

- 1) It is clear from EK's own account that his conduct was improper in that he used abusive, indecent or insulting words, in that he states by his own account that he called an opposition player 'a pussy'.
- 2) It is clear that there were several verbal altercations between the players including one involving EK. The Commission accepts the evidence of the Kingham players and finds that it is more likely than not that EK used language and behaviour which was designed to mimic or mock DC's voice and that he made remarks which included a reference to race/colour and/or nationality such as "why are you even here" and/or "where are you from" and/or "what's that stupid accent, do you think you're Jamaican or something" and/or "stop trying to be Jamaican or similar.
- 3) The Commission finds that the actions of EK, including the mocking of DC's voice and use of language was improper and/or brings the game into disrepute and that this breach of Rule E3.1 is aggravated as it includes a reference to race.
- 4) Accordingly the Commission finds both of the charges to be proven

## **Sanction**

19. The Commission considered the FA Sanctioning Guidelines in relation to breaches of rule E3.1 of the Rules of the Football Association noting that the sanctioning range is 6-12 matches. 6 matches is the standard minimum, a Commission may impose a suspension in excess of 12 matches where there are significant aggravating factors. A participant found to have committed an aggravated breach will be subject to an education programme.

20. Following the finding of liability the Commission sought the disciplinary record of EK. The Commission concludes the following mitigating factors are present:

- There are no other previous FA disciplinary misconduct findings.
- EK has expressed remorse in the correspondence to the Commission.
- EK's behaviour was potentially at least in part provoked through a verbal altercation which made derogatory reference to his late mother. Whilst this does not excuse EK's conduct it is nevertheless important context for behaviour which appears to have been a one off.

21. In terms of aggravating features, the offence was public in nature, being committed in a public place loud enough for other players and potentially members of the public to hear and see.

22. The Commission concludes that applying the FA Sanctioning Guidelines, and balancing the aggravating and mitigating features, the appropriate sanction is:

1. to serve a suspension from all football and football activities for 6 matches
2. to satisfactorily complete a face to face mandatory education programme before the time-based suspension is served, or Edward Knight be suspended until such time he successfully completes the mandatory education programme, the details of which will be provided to him;

23. The decision is subject to the right of appeal under the relevant FA Rules and Regulations.

**Katherine Southby (Chair)**  
**30 January 2024**