

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

Case ID : 11452155M

OXFORDSHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

And

CHINNOR 1st

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

Case ID : 11452156M

OXFORDSHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

And

THOMAS EDMONDS

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

Case ID : 11452157M

OXFORDSHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

And

BRITWELL

DECISION AND REASONS

**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. The matters formed part of consolidated proceedings which involved a total of 3 charges having been raised against the 3 participants named above.

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

(i) Chinnor 1st

3. By a Misconduct Charge Notification dated 3 November 2023 (the “Charge Notification”) issued by the Oxfordshire FA, alleged that Chinnor 1st (“Chinnor”) during a match (“the match”) between Chinnor 1st v Britwell Men on 21 October 2023 failed to ensure directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any match contrary to FA Rule E20.

“Details - It is alleged that Chinnor failed to ensure that directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives attending any match do not behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting, or provocative contrary to FA Rule E20.1. This refers to the allegation that a mass confrontation took place which involved players and/or officials. Its further alleged that Chinnor players surrounded the match official. This incident resulted in the match official abandoning the match due to the safety of himself and players.”

4. Chinnor was required to submit a response to the charge by 9 November 2023, and did so pleading Guilty to the charge and requesting that the case be dealt with in their absence.

5. As such the matter was dealt with by way of a Non-Personal Hearing.

(ii) Thomas Edmonds

6. By a Misconduct Charge Notification dated 3 November 2023 (the “Charge Notification”) issued by the Oxfordshire FA, alleged that Thomas Edmonds (“TE”) during a match (“the match”) between Chinnor 1st v Britwell Men on 21 October 2023 used improper conduct including violent conduct contrary to FA Rule E3.1.

“Details - Thomas Edmonds is hereby charged with a breach of FA Rule E3.1 Improper Conduct including Violent Conduct in respect of the above fixture. It is alleged that during the fixture Mr Edmonds punched opposing player(s) which is improper pursuant to FA Rule E3.1.”

7. Thomas Edmonds was required to submit a response to the charge by 10 November 2023, and did so pleading Not Guilty to the charge and requesting that the case be dealt with in their absence.

8. As such the matter was dealt with by way of a Non-Personal Hearing.

(iii) Britwell

9. By a Misconduct Charge Notification dated 3 November 2023 (the “Charge Notification”) issued by the Oxfordshire FA, alleged that Britwell Mens (“Britwell”) during a match (“the match”) between Chinnor 1st v Britwell Men on 21 October

2023 failed to ensure directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any match contrary to FA Rule E20.

“Details - It is alleged that Britwell failed to ensure that directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives attending any match do not behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting, or provocative contrary to FA Rule E20.1. This refers to the allegation that a mass confrontation took place which involved players and/or officials. This incident resulted in the match official abandoning the match due to the safety of himself and players.”

Evidence

10. 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.

Evidence from the Match Official

11. The match official Barry Lynch (“BL”) completed an Extraordinary Incident Report on 22 October 2023 which stated that following an incident in the 62nd minute of play *‘players from both sides game running in to get involved a lot of pushing and shoving...4 or 5 players form Chinnor surrounded me and shouting did you see Britwell Goalkeeper kick one of our players in the back. I felt very intimidated’*. BL confirmed that he did not see the Britwell GK kick one of the Chinnor players in the back. BL also states *“then one of the Chinnor coaches came up to me shouting*. He states that meanwhile players from both sides were still having a confrontation and therefore in his opinion given so much anger from both sides, in the interest of the safety of himself and the players he abandoned the game.

Evidence from CHINNOR

Tom Pegrum (“TP”) – Captain, Chinnor

12. TP states that a Chinnor player was fouled – “He’s then surrounded by 4/5 of their players not being allowed to get to his feet. The GK then runs over from 20 yards and boots our player in the back whilst he is still on the floor. A few of our team run over to help our player up, the GK then hits our CB in the face.” TP states that the referee spoke to the captains saying *‘I could send them both off for this’* but TP was unsure which players he was referring to. The referee confirmed to TP he did not see the incident.

Andrew Threlfall (“AT”) – Manager Chinnor

13. AT states *“The Britwell goalkeeper was behaving in a threatening manner from the start of the game. In the 1st half he was threatening the Chinnor team with violence and was clearly heard shouting by several players ‘I am going to punch one of you Chinnor players today’*. In the 60th minute of the game with the score 5-2 in Chinnor’s favour Chinnor’s number 9 Keegan Simpson was violently tackled from behind by a Britwell player...The referee blew his whistle for a foul. As Simpson was

trying to get back up the Britwell captain clearly punched Chinnor player Simpson (9) full in the face in clear view of everyone present. This forced Simpson down again, the Britwell goalkeeper then ran up to him and violently kicked him in the lower part of his back.

Players from both sides proceeded to crowd around the area to prevent the Britwell goalkeeper and captain from continuing the unprovoked attack on Simpson. The Britwell goalkeeper was then seen to attack another Chinnor player (Adams No 5) and punched him in the face. Somehow the referee failed to notice any of the above."

Lawrence Ash ("LA") – Player Chinnor

14. LA states that he was on the subs bench when he saw a foul called for a tackle on a Chinnor striker. He states that the Chinnor player tried to push off the Britwell player who was standing over him preventing him getting up, following which the Britwell player pushed the Chinnor player. *"A crowd formed around both players. Within that crowd the Britwell keeper came over and kicked the Chinnor player on the floor through the crowd which caused more people to begin pushing and shoving each other. A Chinnor player came over to get in between the goalkeeper and the crowd and pushed him, the Britwell Keeper responded by hitting him in the head/face."*

Nathan Green ("NG") – Player, Chinnor

15. NG states that the Chinnor striker was fouled resulting in him being crowded by opposition players *"The gk has run 20 yards to kick and punch our player while he was on the floor. We were calm and our captain pulled our players away from the situation. During this the gk has punched another one of our players...no cards were given and game was abandoned."*

Richard Matthews ("RM") – Spectator

16. RM states *"After the ref blew for a foul on the Chinnor striker, I saw the Britwell captain push and hit our player on the floor. The britwell keeper then came running over and kicked the striker on the floor. A Chinnor player then tried to get in between the striker and the britwell goalkeeper, so the goal keeper just hit him in the face."*

Keegan Simpson ("KS") – Player, Chinnor

17. KS states that the Britwell captain continued to kick him after he had been fouled and was on the floor, and in an attempt to stop him KS tried to push the Britwell captain away. *"this then led to him striking me in the face, when trying to get up I was crowded by about 4 britwell players meaning I couldn't get up. The keeper then came behind me when I was still on the floor and kicked me in the back, I then managed to get up because of our number 5 helping me up yet still being pushed by britwell players to then see the keeper punch our number 5 in the face."*

Will Threlfall ("WT") – Player Chinnor

18. WT states *"Chinnor no 9 was fouled on the edge of the box and ended up on the floor...the Britwell GK ran over to the chinnor player and kicked him whilst he was on the floor. Players piled in to separate the situation and the Britwell GK then punched Chinnor no 5 in the face. The players were separated without any more incident."*

Alfie Matthews ("AM") – Player Chinnor

19. AM states that the Chinnor number 9 was fouled by the Britwell captain who continued to stand over him and push him while on the ground. *"At this point a few players from Britwell surrounded our player who was on the floor (Chinnor number 9) at this point the Britwell goalkeeper came straight over and kicked the Chinnor number 9 while he was on the floor and surrounded. AM states that after the referee continued to ignore this the goalkeeper punched the Chinnor number 9 in the face. "At this point everyone got a bit pushy. Chinnor number 5 then came over to calm the situation and pull the rest of the Chinnor team away, he got slapped round the face by the Britwell Goalkeeper. The referee said he did not see any of the ...offences committed by the Britwell goalkeeper. At this point our bench started to speak to the referee...The referee then walked off and we heard words that the match had been abandoned."*

Sam Adams ("SA") – Player, Chinnor

20. SA states *"our striker was fouled, their keeper kicked him in the back. I went over to help our striker up then the goalkeeper punched me in the face."*

Ben Morgan ("BM") – Player Chinnor

21. BM states *"after our player was assaulted on the floor by the Britwell goalkeeper, he then proceeded to hit our CB in the head. The referee claimed he never saw it so couldn't do anything...The bench and management continued to question his decision without being aggressive towards the ref."*

Tom Threlfall ("TT") – Player, Chinnor

22. TT reports the Britwell captain preventing the Chinnor striker from getting back to his feet following which the Britwell goalkeeper *"came running over and kicked him hard in the back whilst he was still on the floor. Some of our teammates went over to help and the goalkeeper then proceeded to punch our centre back in the face. The referee claimed not to have seen the incident..."*

Andy Bennett ("AB") – Chairman, Chinnor FC

23. Correspondence [page 30] states that Chinnor accept there was a mass confrontation but that it involved both clubs. Chinnor also confirm that they confronted the referee but deny surrounding him or that their actions led to the abandonment of the game.

Evidence from Thomas Edmonds

Thomas Edmonds ("TE") – Goalkeeper, Britwell

24. TE denies any violent conduct. He states that having come off his line to collect the ball and got low, the Chinnor striker fell over the top of him and landed hard. *"The striker felt there was a foul and invaded my personal space in an aggressive way so I pushed him away as I felt intimidated. After I pushed him all his team mates surrounded me pushing and shoving then the Chinnor management team surrounded the match official. The ref said he feared for his safety and for mine also and called the game off as words such "HE WILL BE GOING OFF IN A STRETCHER" were repeatedly said".*

Evidence from BRITWELL

John Brennan ("JB") – Manager, Britwell

25. JB states that "a situation occurred that lead to a melee of players from both sides pushing and shoving that was subsequently broken up by the referee, Barry Lynch, who seemed to have control of the situation until he had a chat to both captains from there respective teams and then all hell seemed to break lose. Several of the Chinnor FC players and management approached and surrounded Barry, frequently shouting at him that he had got a lot of decisions wrong and persisted with comments such as "You don't know what your fucking doing ref" and "Send some players off or they'll be stretchered off." It was after this kind of abuse that the referee refused to play the remainder of the game for fear of his and players safety."

Stuart Rowbottom ("SR") – Player, Britwell

26. SR states that the game had become "a shouting match on Chinnor's part but this shouting culminated in around the 75th min when the referee had seen enough and, after being surrounded and shouted at by Chinnor players and management, decided to call off the game through fear of his safety... [they] continued to harass the ref with shouts like your fucking shit ref and send him off or he's going off in a stretcher. I made sure all of my players remained calm and give the ref the space and respect he deserved and I also made sure he was ok once he had abandoned the game and me and a few of the Britwell players offered to escort him to his car if he felt threatened as he had said he was genuinely fearful for his safety."

Dean Bone ("DB") – Spectator, Britwell

27. DB states "I have seen some events and stupidity down the years but none more as daft as Saturdays chaos caused by Chinnor towards the ref which is all the more absurd and just un called for considering they where WINNING AT THE TIME...it was into the second half when a bunch of handbags between players lead to around 5 or 6 Chinnor players and there bald manager...surrounding the match ref and shouting abuse at the poor guy.

**HOW THE FUCK DID YOU NOT SEE THAT
ARE YOU FUCKING BLIND REF**

Are some of the shouts I heard along with talk of players being stretchered off!"

Liability

28. 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.

29. 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.

30. 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.

(i) Chinnor

31. The Commission note that Chinnor have accepted the charge and therefore no determination of liability is required.

(ii) Thomas Edmonds

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

- i. There are differing accounts of what happened following the foul on the KS. Notably the only account from a Britwell player, coach or supporter which refers to the incident which led up to the melee is TE who states that KS invaded his personal space so he pushed him away, following which the Chinnor players surrounded TE and the Chinnor bench surrounded the match official. The Commission does not find this sequence of events to be plausible. It does not seem to us likely that given the stage of the game, and score in Chinnor's favour that a scenario as innocuous as TE describes – i.e. a push away – would result in the mass response from Chinnor he then reports.
- ii. The Commission did not find the evidence of TE credible.
- iii. The Commission finds the accounts of the Chinnor players, and management to be persuasive. They are broadly consistent save that there is some ambiguity about the first of the three violent incidents – an initial strike to the face which is variously attributed to the Britwell captain/goalkeeper. However, there is unanimity that TE assaulted KS with a kick to the back, and also unanimity the TE assaulted SA with a strike to the face/head. The brief accounts of those who were struck are particularly compelling and unambiguous and are consistent with the remonstrations which followed, which are accepted by Chinnor.

33. Accordingly by reasons of the credible evidence of direct witnesses to the incident the Commission finds that Thomas Edmonds used improper conduct including violent conduct contrary to FA Rule E3.1. The Commission therefore find the charge **proven**.

(iii) Britwell

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

- i. As noted above, there are differing accounts of what happened following the foul on the KS.
- ii. The match official is clear that following the incident *“players from both sides game running in to get involved a lot of pushing and shoving”*. This is consistent with the evidence of AT, manager of Chinnor who states *“Players from both sides proceeded to crowd around the area....”* It is also consistent with the evidence from JB, manager for Britwell that *“a situation occurred that lead to a melee of players from*

both sides pushing and shoving that was subsequently broken up by the referee.”

- iii. The Commission finds the evidence of JB particularly persuasive, in that it is in respect of the conduct of his own players. The commission is persuaded by the totality of the evidence that there was an absence of order from the Britwell players, in that pushing and shoving is not consistent with conducting oneself in an orderly fashion.
- iv. The Commission therefore finds that Britwell failed to ensure directors, players, officials, employees, servants, representatives, conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending any match contrary to FA Rule E20. The Commission therefore finds the charge **proven**.

Previous disciplinary record

35. After finding the charges proven, the Commission sought both the Clubs and TE's offence history over the past 5 years.

(i) Chinnor

36. The Commission notes that there are several instances of misconduct noted across the past 5 years. These include two previous instances of breaches of Rule E20 in 2019 and 2018 (exceeding Club disciplinary points threshold), and a breach of Rule E21 (failure to ensure supporters conduct themselves in an orderly fashion) in 2022.

37. In respect of Chinnor, the relevant FA Disciplinary Regulations states that the guidelines for a breach of FA Rule E20.1 is a fine between £0 and £300.

38. After taking into account all circumstances in this case, including that the Chinnor remonstrations were triggered by violent conduct by an opposition player, and the admission of responsibility for which credit has been given, but also the previous record of the Club and the ultimate abandonment of the match due at least in part to the actions of Chinnor players and staff, in this regard the Commission determines that Chinnor is:

- i. fined a sum of £150.

(ii) Thomas Edmonds

39. The Commission notes that there is one previous instance of violent conduct recorded in April 2022 but no actual instances of misconduct recorded.

40. In respect of Thomas Edmonds, the relevant FA Disciplinary Regulations states that the guidelines for a breach of FA Rule E3.1 is a fine between £20 and £125.

41. There is no credit to be applied as the charge was disputed. There is no other mitigation put forward. The Commission notes that Thomas Edmonds assaulted two players and that the match was ultimately abandoned as a consequence of actions which flowed from the initial misconduct of Mr Edmonds. After taking account of all

the circumstances of the case the Commission determines that the offence is in the High category and the correct sanction is as follows:

- i. Thomas Edmonds is suspended from all domestic club football until such time as Britwell have completed five first team competitive matches in all competitions.

(iii) Britwell

42. The Commission notes that there are several instances of misconduct noted across the past 5 years. These include two instances of breaches of Rule E20 in June 2021, March 2023.

43. In respect of Britwell, the relevant FA Disciplinary Regulations states that the guidelines for a breach of FA Rule E20.1 is a fine between £0 and £300.

44. There is no credit to be applied as the charge was disputed despite the evidence of their own official appearing to accept what had happened. The Commission notes that the match was ultimately abandoned at least in part due to the conduct of the Britwell players, and more specifically as a consequence of Britwell player Thomas Edmonds. After taking account of all of the circumstances of the case the Commission determines that Britwell is:

- i. fined a sum of £150

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

Katherine Southby (Chair)
13 November 2023