

Disciplinary Commission ("The Commission")

Oxfordshire Football Association (OFA)

In the matter of Mr. Neil SKIDMORE – Case ID: 9610788

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 Thursday 20th December 2018
2. The Commission members were Mr. T. R. Williams (Chairperson), Mr. R. Davies and Mr. E Todd (independent member). Mr. S. Honey was Commission Secretary.
3. Mr. Skidmore had been charged by OFA in respect of the following matter:-
Charge: FA Rule E3 - Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour)

With an alternative, lesser charge of:

Charge 2: FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including abusive language/behaviour)
4. The OFA received a misconduct report from the match referee, Mr. Christopher Isaac, in which he reported misconduct by Mr. Skidmore.
5. Charges were then raised regarding the alleged misconduct by Mr. Skidmore during the match between Kennington Athletic Reserves and Adderbury Park Reserves played on 3rd November 2018 in the Oxfordshire Senior League.

The circumstances are taken from the referee's misconduct report:-

"After I had dismissed Neil Skidmore from the field of play in the 14th minute of the second half he shouted whilst leaving the field of play and turning his head "you're the worst ref we've ever had." He then turned around and started to walk towards me. Whilst he approached me, he stated in a threatening manner "I'll see you after the game ref" which was very intimidating.

This incident occurred about half way between the centre circle and the Adderbury Park penalty area. The Adderbury Park Club Assistant was standing parallel to their left back and was approximately 15 yards from the incident. I spoke with several Adderbury Park players to ascertain who the Adderbury Park Captain was to inform him of the player's misconduct and I was informed that Neil Skidmore was the Adderbury Park Captain. I had a clear and unobstructed view of this incident and I was approximately 10 yards away. I spoke with the Adderbury Park Manager who

was acting as the Club Assistant Referee at the time of this incident and informed him of the player's behaviour and that a separate misconduct report would be made.

Kennington had a freestanding Respect notice at their ground which clearly explained the behaviour expected of players and Club Officials. There were also additional Respect notices in the Club House. It is exactly this type of behaviour that stops referees wanting to officiate in games and I don't see why Referees should be subject to this type of threatening behaviour whilst officiating."

6. As a result of the content of that misconduct report the OFA undertook an investigation, during which it sought further information from Mr. Isaac and sought observations from Adderbury Park Football Club.
7. 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 members determined the matter. For the avoidance of doubt, the Commission carefully considered all the evidence and materials furnished with regard to this case.
8. At the conclusion of the investigation the charge was raised against Mr. Skidmore by the OFA on 7th November 2018.
9. An on-line response to the charge raised against Mr. Skidmore was received by OFA in which he entered a plea of "not guilty" and indicated he was content for the matter to be dealt with by a Commission in his absence and heard as a Correspondence Hearing.

A brief written response was received from Mr. Skidmore. As well as a statement from Mr. James Collier the Adderbury Park Chairman.
10. The Commission convened at the OFA offices to consider the matter on the 20th December 2018. All the available evidence in this matter had been supplied, in advance to all its members and had been studied by them.
11. Mr. Skidmore had entered a "not guilty" plea in respect of the charge. The Commission considered the evidence and the charges, and were unanimous in their decision that Mr Skidmore by approaching the referee Mr Isaac and saying "I will see you after the game", had acted in a threatening manner, making Mr Isaac feel vulnerable or at risk to the extent that Mr Isaac reported "..... I immediately

reported the matter to the Adderbury Park Manager to hopefully avoid any issues after the game”.

As a result of the above the Commission unanimously determined that Mr Skidmore was guilty of the charge, FA Rule E3 - Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).

12. Mr. Honey advised the Commission as to Mr. Skidmore’s disciplinary record over the previous 5 years which showed there were no other Misconduct Charges or findings of guilt in the past 5 years. There was a Sending Off in 2017/2018 season for Violent Conduct in an Oxfordshire FA Charity Cup game played on the 16th September 2017.

13. In respect of this breach of FA Rule E3 the Commission referred to the Disciplinary Sanctions Guidelines issued by the FA in coming to its decision. Recommended punishment for Threatening Behaviour against a Match Official carries 112 days/12 matches plus up to £100 fine but with a mandatory minimum of 56 days/6 matches & £50 fine.

14. The Commission considered Mr Skidmore’s discipline record and unanimously agreed that the offence was serious, but a first offence of this nature and so the following sanction be imposed in respect of the matter:-

- a suspension of 6 Matches from 24th December 2018 with the end date to be confirmed (All Football Activities CFA Only)

If player is also a Match Official (Referee/Assistant Referee) whilst serving the above suspension you are not permitted to referee any football until the above suspension has been completed and served;

- a fine of £50;
- 5 disciplinary penalty points;

This sporting sanction is to be served first and any uncompleted suspension in respect of the sending off will commence after its completion.

15. 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.

T. R. Williams (Commission Chairperson)

R. Davies

E. Todd

20th December 2018