

The Football Association Disciplinary Commission

(‘The Commission’)

Sitting on behalf of Sussex FA

In the matter of Chris Churchill

(Case number 10068310M)

Disciplinary Commission Decision:

1. The members of the Commission were Mr Les Pharo appointed by the FA.
2. **Mr Chris Churchill** was the subject of one charge:

A breach of FA Rule E3: Improper conduct against a match official (Including physical contact and threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).

The Rules Rule E3: The FA handbook 2019/20 state the following:

“ 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, of a combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour”.

Physical contact is defined in the FA handbook page 182 as:

“Physical contact or attempted physical contact: examples include but are not limited to: pushing the match official, pulling the match official, (or their clothing or equipment), barging or kicking the ball at a match official (causing no injury) and/or attempting to make physical contact with the match official (for example, attempting to strike, kick butt, barge or kick the ball at the match official”.

3. Mr Churchill had responded and accepted the charge against him and asked the matter be dealt with by way of a non-personal hearing.
4. This matter was therefore dealt with by way of a non-personal hearing on Friday 3rd January 2020, by way of a Chair alone procedure as per FA Regulations.
5. The following is a summary of the principal submissions considered by the Chair. It does not purport to contain reference to all points considered, 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.

6. The charges against Mr Churchill of AFC Romans were brought by Sussex FA as a result of a report from the match referee Mr Joe Jeffrey concerning a match played on 1st December 2019 between AFC Romans Sunday First and Kingston Broadway First in the Sussex Sunday Challenge Trophy, where it was alleged that at the end of the match Mr Churchill (a spectator) approached Mr Jeffrey and said, "Give me the fucking ball" and then punched the ball from under the referees arm, and pushed the referee in the chest with two hands. Mr Churchill was pulled away by Mr Arthur Gray. When asked by the referee for his name he refused to give it and the club later that day provided the referee with the name of the person concerned, that being Mr Churchill.
7. In support of the charge, aside from the referee report there was a statement from a spectator Mr Arthur Gray not associated with either club, who confirms that the referee was sworn at and the ball was wrestled from the referees possession, and that there had been contact on the referee by this person.
8. In response to the charge there was a written statement from Mr Churchill dated 8th December to be considered, and a plea for leniency undated, Dion Osborne a player of AFC Romans, and Mitchell Macdiarmid a spectator.
9. In considering all the documentation in this matter, it was clear, and it was admitted that there had been contact with the referee, it was also considered by the Commission Chair to be threatening. Mr Churchill in his defence stated that it was not his intention to touch the referee, but "just to retrieve the ball." This was not considered a valid defence or excuse, it was clear that during this act there was physical contact, the only issue was the extent of that contact, and there was no reason to doubt the evidence of the referee.
10. Having taken all these matters into consideration and the fact that the matter was admitted, sanction was considered, and the following factors were taken into consideration:
 1. The fact that the matter was admitted.
 2. The apology from Mr Churchill.
 3. His previous record.
 4. The FA sanction guidelines.

The following sanction was therefore imposed:

For a breach of FA Rule E3: Improper conduct against a match official (Including physical contact and threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).

Mr Chris Churchill is suspended from all football for a period of 120 days and is fined the sum of £100-00.

AFC Romans have 10 discipline points awarded against them

11. There is a right of Appeal against these decisions in accordance with the relevant provisions set out in the prevailing FA Rules and Regulations of the Association

Les Pharo
Chair
3rd January 2020.