

Disciplinary Commission (“The Commission”)
On behalf of Worcestershire Football Association (Worcs.FA)
In the matter of
Mr. Michael HILL - Case ID: 10463527M
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 Wednesday 22nd September 2021.

2. Worcs. FA had raised a charge against Mr. Michael Hill as follows:-

Charge: FA Rule E3 – Improper Conduct against a Match Official (including threatening and/or abusive language/behaviour).

That charge was detailed as follows:-

“Details: It is alleged that Michael Hill (Leasowes FC Veterans – player) used Improper Conduct against a match official...contrary to FA Rule E3. This refers to the allegation that : “Michael Hill then turned towards myself and walked towards me in a threatening manner, shouting violently and aggressively that he would – drag me to the car park-; At those point I abandoned the match...” (sic)

The charge had been raised following alleged misconduct by Mr. Hill, a player with Leasowes FC, during the match between Leasowes FC Veterans Firsts (Leasowes) and Malvern Town Spartan Veterans (Malvern) played on Friday 27th August 2021 in the Worcestershire Veterans League.

3. Worcs. FA received a misconduct report from the match referee, Mr. Matthew Ellis, in which he said, *“...In the 55th minute...I issued a red card for violent conduct and sent him off. He slowly walked towards the touchline, but when still on the field of play (about 20 yards from the touchline) he sat down and slowly took off his boots and shin pads. I asked him to leave the pitch to which he responded to me by shouting in a threatening and abusive manner “what the fuck are you going to do?” ...Michael Hill was sat on the pitch for some two or three minutes in total and after myself and the Leasowes captain had unsuccessfully asked him to leave, the Malvern manager then entered... and approached Michael Hill asking him to leave the pitch. Michael Hill the stood up, raised his arms and started shouting aggressively at the Malvern manager, threatening to take it onto the car park. Michael Hill the turned towards myself and walked towards me in a threatening manner, shouting violently and aggressively that he would drag me to the car park”. At this point I abandoned the match...” (sic).*

4. As a result of that report Worcs. FA undertook an investigation during which it requested further information form Mr. Ellis. In response to questions asked of him he said, *“...Michael only walked 2/3 steps towards me and did not come closer than*

about 10 yards to me...Even when he was sat down, his verbal language and body language made me feel threatened. The main "body language" towards me was arm waving and finger pointing. There was nothing towards me where he was right up in my face, or going to punch me, that was all towards the opposition's manager..."
(sic)

5. Mr. Ellis also provided the screen shot of a "WhatsApp" message he received from the Leasowes manager after the match. It included a message from Mr. Hill in which he said *"...i was completely out of order and i apologise wholeheartedly..i couldn't sleep when I got home as I knew I acted a twat...it wont happen again mate, and obviously any fine ill cover as its mine..."* (sic)
6. At the conclusion of the investigation Worcs. FA raised the charge against Mr. Hill on 7th September 2021.
7. An on-line response to the charge was received in which Mr. Hill entered a plea of "accept – correspondence" thus also indicating he was content for the matter to be dealt with in his absence. A further response was received from Mr. Darren Thrupp, Leasowes player/manager. In it he said, *"...I was on the pitch playing, when there was coming together between one of my teams players and one from the opposition. This rusted in a red card shown to our player...The game continued once our player left the pitch for approx. 5-10 minutes. The referee then blew his whistle, and said the game was abandoned. When I questioned why, he said he was threatened by our player that he had sent off from the side off the pitch. I did not hear or had any knowledge of these threats being made as if I did, I'd have challenged them myself...The player in question has been challenged by myself since the evening as I can't accept poor behaviour that will impact the other players within our team. They have apologised (whole heartedly – his words) and assure me that it won't happen again. This message of apology has been sent over to the Ref for the fixture in question..."* (sic).
8. 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.
9. As Mr. Hill had accepted the charge raised against him the Commission was only concerned with determining the sanctions to be imposed. For clarity it should be noted however that, after considering all the evidence, the Commission was content to accept the plea from him.

10. Mr. Hill's disciplinary record over the last 5 years was then considered. It showed no previous recorded misconduct.

11. Reference was then made to FA Rule E3.1, along with Regulations 96, 101 and 102 of Part D, Section Three of the FA's Disciplinary Regulations and the Disciplinary Sanctions Guidelines issued by the FA in coming to its decision. It was noted that the sanction for threatening behaviour towards a match official was stated to be:-

- a suspension from all football activity for a period between 56 and 182 days with a recommended entry point, prior to considering any mitigating or aggravating factors, of 112 days;
- a fine of up to £100 with a mandatory minimum fine of £50;
- an order that the participant completes an education programme before the time-based suspension is served.

12. The Commission considered if there were any mitigating or additional aggravating factors in respect of the matters before it. It found mitigating factors to be Mr. Hill's disciplinary record, the apology sent via social media after the match (although that had been to his manager and did not mention offering an apology to the referee) and his early "*guilty*" plea. However his actions had caused the referee to abandon the match which was considered to be an aggravating factor.

13. Having taken into consideration all the facts in the matter the Commission determined that the following sanction be imposed on Mr. Hill:-

- a suspension for 119 days from all football activity;
- a fine of £75;
- a requirement for Mr. Hill to undertake the appropriate on-line FA Education Course before the date his 119-day suspension has been completed. If he fails to do so within that timescale he is to be suspended from all football activity until such time as he is in compliance with this order. Details of the course will be provided to him.
- 8 disciplinary penalty points imposed on Leasowes FC.

14. 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

22nd September 2021