

Football Association Regulatory Commission (the 'Commission') in the matter of a charge of Misconduct brought against Neal Maupay ('NM') of Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club ('BHAFC').

Regulatory Commission Decision

1. These are the written reasons for a decision made by an Independent Regulatory Commission which sat on 17th May 2021.
2. The Commission members were Mr. Stuart Ripley (Chairman), Mr. Tony Agana and Mr. Tariq Sadiq, all three of whom are Independent Members of the FA Judicial Panel.
3. Mr. Paddy McCormack, Judicial Services Manager, acted as Secretary to the Regulatory Commission.
4. The incident in question occurred after the final whistle of the Wolverhampton Wanderers FC v Brighton & Hove Albion FC, Premier League fixture that took place on 9th May 2021.
5. The incident fell outside the jurisdiction of the Match Officials but was reported to the Football Association. As such it was designated as a Fast track, Non-Standard, case in accordance with the Fast-Track Regulations as set out in the FA Handbook 2020-21.

6. It was alleged by The FA that following his dismissal at full time, NM's language and/or behaviour was abusive and/or insulting and/or improper.

7. The FA relied on the following evidence:

- a. Report of the Match Referee, Mr. J. Moss, dated 9th May 2021;
- b. Report of Assistant Referee, Mr. T. Wood, dated 10th May 2021;
- c. Report of Assistant Referee, Mr. M. Perry, dated 10th May 2021; and
- d. Two video clips of the incident.

8. In his report the Referee, Mr. J. Moss stated: *"[NM] was shown a red card and sent from the field of play. Mr Maupay was escorted away by several team mates. However, he refused to go, breaking away and returning to confront us again in an aggressive manner. "What have I fucking done". I asked Mr Maupay to leave the field again, but he refused to do so shouting and pointing in an aggressive manner at all three officials. The assistant manager of Brighton then arrived on the scene and grabbed Mr Maupay and eventually escorted him away from the scene. However, unfortunately, Mr Maupay was not finished, as he broke away from the Assistant manager and confronted us for a third time telling me I was a fucking joke. Eventually several teammates were able to drag Mr Maupay away and he left the field of play towards the tunnel area having refused to leave the field following his red card on three occasions while continuing to verbally abuse the match officials."*

9. In his report, Assistant Referee, Timothy Wood stated: *"The referee therefore showed MAUPAY a red card and sent him from the field of play. MAUPAY continued to return towards us on several occasions, appearing to become increasingly agitated and being restrained by teammates and club*

officials. He continued to use language similar to above towards us, including "WHAT HAVE I FUCKING DONE" and "YOU'RE A FUCKING JOKE". The referee continued to encourage MAUPAY to leave the field of play, reminding him that he had now been sent off."

10. In his report, Assistant Referee, Marc Perry, stated: *"Following the red card this did not help calm Neal down. He continued to approach in an aggressive manor [sic], several of his team mates tried to move Neal away. However, he continued to use the "f" word."*

11. NM responded to the charge by way of the FA's Disciplinary Proceedings Reply Form, dated 13th May 2021. He admitted the charge and requested an opportunity to attend a Commission for a Personal Hearing.

12. Attached to the Reply form was a letter from NM dated 13th May 2021 which stated: *"I acknowledge my actions were not of the standards expected, by both myself and my Club, therefore I would appreciate the Commission giving me the time to discuss this during the Hearing."*

The Hearing

13. The Commission was convened on the 17th May 2021. The FA was represented by Ms. Amina Graham. NM represented himself with the assistance of the BHAFC Club Secretary, Mr. Brett Baker.

14. The following is a summary of the principal submissions and evidence provided to the Commission. It does not purport to contain reference to all

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 has carefully considered all the evidence and materials furnished with regard to this case.

15. With the charge having been admitted by NM, the Commission's role was to hear submissions from the FA and NM and to consider all the surrounding circumstances in order to come to a sanction that was both fair and proportionate.

16. The Commission heard from Mr McCormack that, beyond a number of on-field cautions, NM had only one disciplinary incident on his previous record which was an incident of 'violent conduct' that had not been seen by the officials whilst playing for Brentford FC on 22 August 2018. This charge had been admitted by NM at the time.

17. Ms Graham took the Commission through the two video clips of the incident and pointed out the moments when NM had approached the Referee and had abusively shouted at him. As Ms Graham pointed out, the footage spoke for itself, it was clear that NM had lost control of his emotions and was acting in an abusive and aggressive manner towards the Referee.

18. NM addressed the Commission. He spoke well and it was clear that he was ashamed of his behaviour during the incident. He apologised to the Commission and asked that his apologies also be passed on to the Match Officials, particularly the Referee, Mr Moss.

19. Mr Baker spoke and told the Commission that it was important to the Club that NM made his apologies in person and not remotely by way of a few lines and a signature on a document.

The Decision

20. The Commission recognised the importance that match officials are permitted to officiate and make decisions throughout a game without having to receive abuse from disgruntled players at the end of the match. The Commission considered NM's actions to have been totally unacceptable and that they merited a severe sanction through the combination of both a sporting sanction and a substantial fine. With the case having been designated as Non-Standard the Commission had an unfettered discretion as to what combination of suspension and fine it felt appropriate in the circumstances.

21. The Commission did not consider the one previous incident on NM's disciplinary record to be relevant to this charge. Indeed, Ms Graham stated to the Commission that the FA did not consider the previous disciplinary record of NM to be an aggravating factor in this case.

22. The Commission appreciated the approach of the Club and considered NM's apologies both written and verbal, to have been sincere. This was to NM's credit.

23. The Commission noted that NM had admitted the charge and had not attempted to dispute any of the allegations made against him. This also was to his credit.

24. The Commission recognised that NM had already been suspended for two matches for the red card he had received for approaching the Referee and using abusive language which whilst not forming part of this particular charge was part of the same ongoing incident.

25. Having taken all the mitigating and aggravating factors of the case into consideration the Commission felt that a further sporting suspension and a significant fine would be an appropriate sanction. As such, the following sanction was considered to be proportionate in all the circumstances:

- a. NM is suspended, effective immediately, from all domestic club football until such time that BHAFC have completed 1 First Team Competitive Match in an approved competition;
- b. NM is fined the sum of £25,000.00

26. In respect to the costs of the Hearing, the Commission felt that these ought to be met by NM as it was his behaviour that had initiated the charge and it was his decision to seek a personal hearing following his admittance to the charge. NM was therefore ordered to pay £900.00 costs.

27. In addition to the above, NM must also forfeit his Hearing Fee of £100.00

28. This decision is subject to Appeal in accordance with the FA's Fast Track Regulations.

Stuart Ripley

Regulatory Commission Chairman

17th May 2021