

IN THE MATTER OF A REGULATORY COMMISSION
OF THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

V

YANN SONGO'O

REASONS FOR THE REGULATORY COMMISSION
DECISION 17 MARCH 2021

Overview

1. By letter dated 9 February 2021 the FA charged Morecambe FC player Yann Songo'o ("YS") with a breach of Rule E3(1), following words he used during a fixture between his team and Tranmere Rovers on 30 January 2021 ("the match"). He called a Tranmere player a "faggot" following a disagreement. The breach was said to be Aggravated as defined by Rule E(3)(2) because it included language referring to sexual orientation.
2. By Reply dated 22 February 2021, YS admitted the charge and indicated that he was content for the matter to be considered on the papers. The hearing was therefore convened via Microsoft Teams on 17 March 2021. The Commission comprised of Aisling Byrnes (independent legal member, Chair), Andrew Adie (independent football member) and Matt Williams (independent football member). John Edmunds acted as secretary to the Commission.

3. Having considered all of the evidence in the case, the Commission issued the following sanction
 - a. 6 match suspension (4 matches to serve as YS has already received a 2 match suspension);
 - b. Requirement to attend an online education course.

The FA's Case

4. Details of the allegation were contained in an Extraordinary Incident Report submitted by the Match Referee, Paul Howard. He reported that, in the 45th minute of the match, a Tranmere player went down with a head injury. The game was stopped whilst a physio came on and a minor verbal disagreement between players ensued. During this, he clearly heard YS say "*You faggot*" to an opponent. Mr Howard therefore sent YS off.
5. YS went off, but subsequently tried to watch the game from the tunnel. He was told by the fourth official, Carl Boyeson, that he would have to remain in the dressing room until the end of the game. At this point YS apologised for saying "*you faggot*", explaining that he was French and did not appreciate how offensive the word was.

YS's case

6. In a witness statement served by way of Reply, YS apologised for his comment. He expressed considerable remorse and explained that, because English is not his first language, he had not appreciated the offence which his comment would cause.
7. He said that the reason he had made the comment was because the opponent in question had moved close to him. When YS asked what he was doing the opponent said he was going to kiss him on the lips.

8. YS indicated that he felt he had let himself, his team and his club down and insisted that it would not happen again. He had been suspended for two matches following his dismissal from the game and his team had lost both matches.
9. The Reply documentation contained submissions made on his behalf by counsel Mr Horton.

Sanction

10. The Commission considered all of the evidence with care.
11. There were no aggravating features here beyond that which rendered the breach an Aggravated one in the first place.
12. As far as mitigation was concerned, the Commission accepted the helpful submissions made on YS's behalf, noting that this was YS's first breach, that he had admitted it at a very early opportunity and that he had expressed remorse.
13. In the circumstances the appropriate penalty was the standard minimum of a six match suspension. Since YS has already been suspended for two matches, he has four matches to serve.
14. YS must also undertake a mandatory online education course within 4 months of this decision. Should he not take the course he will be automatically suspended until such time as the course has been undertaken.

17 March 2021

AISLING BYRNES (Chair)

ANDREW ADIE

MATT WILLIAMS

