

IN THE MATTER OF A FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION  
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION

BETWEEN:

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

and

PORTSMOUTH FC

and

SHEFFIELD UNITED FC

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WRITTEN REASONS AND DECISION OF  
THE INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE  
HEARING ON 11 OCTOBER 2024

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## **Background**

1. These are the written reasons and decisions made by an Independent Regulatory Commission which sat by Microsoft Team video link on 11 October 2024 to consider the consolidated charge against Portsmouth FC (“PFC”) and Sheffield United FC (“SUFC”).
2. The Regulatory Commission members were Mr Michael O’Brien, Chairman and Independent Football Panel Member, Mr Daniel Mole, Independent Football Panel Member, and Mr Mick Kearns, Independent Football Panel Member.
3. Mr Nathan Greenslade, The FA Judicial Services Administrator acted as Secretary to the Regulatory Commission.
4. By letters dated 30 September 2024 and 4 October 2024, The Football Association (“The FA”) submitted that PFC and SUFC were charged respectively with misconduct for breaches of FA Rule E20 in respect of the pre EFL Championship fixture between PFC and SUFC on 28 September 2024 (“the Charge”). The Charges were consolidated pursuant to Regulation 13 of the Regulations.
5. It was alleged that following the final whistle of this fixture both teams failed to ensure that its players and/or technical area occupants did not behave in a way which was improper. The FA designated the cases as Non-Standard due to previous proven breaches of FA Rule E20 for each Club occurring within the previous 12 months.

## **Rule**

6. (i) FA Rule E20 of The FA Regulations 2024/25 (“the Regulations”) states that –

*Each Affiliated Association, Competition and Club shall be responsible for ensuring:  
“that its directors, players, officials, employees, servants and representatives and do behave in a way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting or provocative.*

## **Evidence**

7. The FA and both teams included the following evidence in respect to the Charge:
  - (i) Email report of the Match Referee, dated 28 September 2024; and
  - (ii) Correspondence from PFC dated 3 October 2024; and
  - (iii) Correspondence from SUFC dated 7 October 2024;
  - (iv) Video footage of the incident in question from 2 separate angles

8. The Match Referee, Mr M Donohue stated in his email report –

‘At the end of the match, a number of SUFC players surrounded me to protest the timing of the full time whistle. As this protestation ended, a number of players from both teams confronted each other. In this incident I cautioned SUFC #21 (Vini Souza) for dissent and SUFC #23 (Tyrese Campbell) for adopting an aggressive attitude. No other acts of misconduct were witnessed by any of the match officials’.

### **Replies to the Charge**

9. PFC and SUFC both admitted the Charge by replies respectively dated 3 October 2024 and 7 October 2024.

10. Neither team requested a personal hearing and the case was dealt with on the papers only.

### **Findings**

11. The following 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 of a point, or submission, in these reasons 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 written and video evidence in respect of this case.

12. The Regulatory Commission viewed the video evidence in detail and gave consideration to a number of factors - the incident itself, the timing of the incident, the number of players involved from both sides, the duration and prolongation of the incident, the level of aggression involved and the incitement of the crowd.

13. Having carefully reviewed all the evidence the Commission concluded that several SUFC players ran to protest to the match officials regarding the manner in which the game was ended. There was a degree of frustration apparent from the SUFC players to the extent that a surrounding a match official charge might have been a possibility. Whilst the SUFC players voiced their opinions to the match officials, the PFC goalkeeper chose to run to the officials and shake hands with them. His presence, and in particular something that he said and/or did to SUFC number 42 served to anger some of the SUFC players further. One of the SUFC players (thought to be number 23) then shoves the goalkeeper, causing him to fall to the floor. A confrontation between several players from both Clubs then developed, with SUFC number 21 acting as a particular aggressor throughout. The Commission found on the evidence available that, whilst the actions of the PFC goalkeeper were unhelpful and possibly provocative, SUFC bore more responsibility for the mass confrontation, particularly with regard to the behaviour of the players who were cautioned by the referee. The Commission also noted that the pushing and shoving was relatively brief and no acts of significant violence took place during the confrontation.

## **Sanction**

14. As both teams accepted the Charge, the Commission considered the appropriate sanction to impose. The Commission considered previous sanctions imposed on both teams with regard to recent multi player misconduct. There were three breaches by PFC in the previous 5 years, one of which was within the last 12 months. There were ten previous breaches by SUFC, three of which were within the last 12 months with two of those coming within the last two months. The Commission considered SUFC's record, and in particular the recency of the last two charges, to be a significant aggravating factor.

### **PFC History:**

- PFC v Bristol Rovers, 26 December 2023, Mass Confrontation. Fine £2,500
- PFC v Newport County, 23 August 2022, Surrounding Match Official. Fine £2,500
- PFC v Oxford United, 24 November 2020, Mass Confrontation. Fine 2,500

### **SUFC History**

- SUFC v Watford, 1 September 2024, Mass Confrontation. Fine £17,000
- SUFC v Wrexham, 13 September 2024, Mass Confrontation. Fine £8,500
- SUFC v Leeds Utd (Youth), 7 February 2024, Mass Confrontation. Fine £7,500
- SUFC v Barnsley (Youth), 23 February 2023, Mass Confrontation. Fine £3,000
- SUFC v Crystal Palace (Youth), 13 January 2023, Mass Confrontation. Fine £2,000
- SUFC v Bristol City, 1 November 2022, Mass Confrontation. Fine £15,000
- SUFC v Norwich City, 22 October 2022, Surround Match Official. Fine £7,500
- SUFC v Blackpool, 15 October 2022, Mass Confrontation. Fine £12,500
- SUFC v Derby County (Youth), 7 March 2022, Mass Confrontation. Fine £1,250
- SUFC v Swansea City (Youth), 18 January 2022, Mass Confrontation. Fine £1,250

15. The Commission noted that both Clubs had accepted the charge.

16. The Commission noted that, at EFL Championship level, the FA 'Standard Penalty Guidelines' document for Mass Confrontation cases indicates £5,000 for a standard charge which is accepted and indicates £7,500 for a charge which is denied and then found proven. The guidelines do not apply to a non standard case but were useful for The Commission to consider during determination. Furthermore The Commission noted that the maximum fine applicable in SUFC's case rises from the standard £50,000 for Championship Clubs to £150,000 due to this being the third time this season that

they have had a proven charge against them.

17. The Commission noted that the FA had provided submissions on sanction, suggesting that SUFC should be subject to a fine of at least £75,000 due to the previous proven breaches. The Commission took the view that, whilst the previous proven breaches were a significant aggravating factor which had to be recognised when determining sanction, the behaviour exhibited within the mass confrontation was not sufficient to warrant a fine of £75,000 or more in the case of SUFC.

## **Conclusion**

18. The Commission, having carefully considered the Regulations, the mitigating and aggravating factors, the submissions of the FA and the submissions of the Clubs, imposed the following sanctions:

PFC will be fined the sum of £6,000 (The Commission initially determined a fine of £9,000 but agreed to reduce this based on the acceptance of the charge).

SUFC will be fined the sum of £40,000 (The Commission initially determined a fine of £60,000 but agreed to reduce this based on the acceptance of the charge).

## **Appeal**

19. This decision is subject to the relevant Appeal Regulations.

Mr Michael O'Brien, Chairman and Independent Panel Member

Mr Daniel Mole, Independent Football Panel Member

Mr Mick Kearns, Independent Football Panel Member

**11 October 2024**