Ref. No.: BET/24/0076

IN THE MATTER OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION

AND IN THE MATTER OF AN ALLEGED BREACH OF RULE E8 OF THE FA RULES

Before:

Ms. Grace Cheng (Chair)

Mr. Michael O'Brien

Ms. Alison O'Dowd

BETWEEN:

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

- and -

LEWIS MACARI

DECISION OF THE REGULATORY COMMISSION

Secretariat to the Regulatory Commission:

Mr. Michael O'Connor (FA Judicial Services Assistant Manager)

A. Introduction

- 1. This matter relates to alleged breaches by Mr. Lewis Macari ("Player") of Rule E8 of The Football Association's ("FA") Rules, as set out in The FA Handbook (2019-2020, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-2023 versions) ("Rules", with each of them being a "Rule") in respect of 354 bets ("Bets", with each being a "Bet") placed on football matches between 25 February 2020 to 4 December 2022.
- 2. These proceedings are conducted in accordance with the Rules.

3. Whilst the Commission has considered all facts, evidence, and arguments submitted, the Commission refers in this Decision only to the submissions and evidence it considers necessary to explain its reasoning. Any omission to refer to a piece of evidence or point raised should not be taken as a suggestion that the Commission has not given due consideration to such evidence or submission.

B. Procedural background

- 4. On 26 September 2025, the Regulatory Commission ("Commission") was constituted, comprising of Ms. Grace Cheng (Chair), Mr. Michael O'Brien and Ms. Alison O'Dowd, all of whom are independent panel members of The FA. Mr. Michael O'Connor (FA Judicial Services Assistant Manager) acted as the Secretariat to the Commission.
- 5. On 6 October 2025, a personal hearing ("Hearing") via video conference was held to determine the matter. Ms. Madeleine Deasy (Regulatory Advocate) appeared on behalf of The FA. The Player was in attendance, accompanied by Mr. Kayode Odejayi from The Professional Footballers Association ("PFA"). He was represented by Mr. Nick Cusack (PFA Advocate).
- 6. In advance of the hearing, the Commission was provided with a hearing bundle containing evidence, including The FA's written submissions on sanction.

C. Facts

- 7. The FA is the governing body of English football and is responsible for the governance of all affiliated football in England.
- 8. The Player is aged 23 (d.o.b. 8 February 2002) and currently playing professionally as a First Team Player with Notts County Football Club (EFL League 2) ("NCFC"). His total weekly football include is per week (net). Previously, he was a scholar at Stoke City FC ("SCFC") during the 2019/20 season and signed a professional contract with SCFC on 1 July 2020. He was then contracted/registered to SCFC (Championship) for the 2019/20 season; 2020/21

season; 2021/22 season; and 2022/23 season. During this time, he had also been on loan in Ireland at Dundalk for approximately 9 or 10 months. From September to December 2023, the Player was on loan to NCFC after which he joined them on a permanent basis.

- 9. On 27 May 2025, the Player was interviewed ("Interview") by ("Investigator") who is employed by The FA as a Betting Integrity Investigator. The Interview was conducted via Microsoft Teams. Mr. Kay Odejayi (PFA Player Services) ("KO") was also in attendance.
- 10. During the Interview, the Player admitted to the Charges. The Player stated that "I know that obviously, in terms of me now playing in professional football and that and being involved in English leagues and that, I can't bet on any football altogether full stop". He acknowledged that he had "known for a while" but "was a bit not quite switched on into thinking it really mattered to me, kind of thing because I wasn't in and around first teams". He showed remorse and stated that "I would never put a bet on football again while I'm involved in football... I know that I shouldn't have been doing that".
- 11. The Player was unable to state the precise date when he became aware of The FA Betting Rules. However, he stated that he came to the realisation that he should not be betting on football when he started being in and around the first team after returning from Ireland and this was likely to have been explained to him in meetings at SCFC when he was playing professionally.
- 12. He attributes placing the Bets to his own naivety at the time, as well as the culture of betting in his social group at the time. He repeatedly stated "I just can't understand what was going through my head at that stage, and why I'd done that. And, like, even the betting on Stoke... I don't understand why I did it. And I still can't now, I can't understand what was going through my head, because I know now that, like, and for years, that I can't bet on football". He also placed some bets on horseracing and darts at the time.
- 13. He denied placing any of the Bets using any knowledge that he had due to his position in football at the time and also denied having a gambling addiction. The

- Player apologised repeatedly during the Interview and stated that he would not be "doing anything like that again".
- 14. On 10 July 2025, the Player was charged ("Charges") with misconduct under E1(b) of the Rules in respect of the Bets placed on football matches between 25 February 2020 to 4 December 2022. The particulars of the Charges were as follows:
 - (1) 2019/20 season it was alleged that the Player placed 38 bets ("2019/20 Bets") on football matches between 25 February 2020 and 18 July 2020 whilst he was a participant at SCFC in breach of Rule E8(1)(a)(i)
 - a. 17 of the 2019/20 Bets were placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition.
 - b. 21 of the 2019/20 Bets were placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition in which the Player's club and/or the Player was participating.
 - (2) 2020/21 season it was alleged that the Player placed 214 bets ("2020/21 Bets") on football matches between 17 August 2020 and 7 July 2021 whilst he was a participant at SCFC in breach of Rule E8.1
 - a. 152 of the 2020/21 Bets were placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition.
 - b. 62 of the 2020/21 Bets were placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition in which the Player's club and/or the Player was participating.
 - (3) 2021/22 season it was alleged that the Player placed 77 bets ("2021/22 Bets") on football matches between 13 August 2021 and 12 July 2022 whilst he was a participant at SCFC in breach of Rule E8.1
 - a. 46 of the 2021/22 Bets were placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition.

- b. 31 of the 2021/22 Bets were placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition in which the Player's club and/or the Player was participating.
- (4) 2022/23 season it was alleged that the Player placed 25 bets ("2022/23 Bets") on football matches between 15 August 2022 and 4 December 2022 whilst he was a participant at SCFC in breach of Rule E8.1
 - a. 24 of the 2022/23 Bets were placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition.
 - b. 1 of the 2022/23 Bets was placed on the result and/or progress and/or conduct and/or any other aspect of a football match or competition in which the Player's club and/or the Player was participating.
- 15. On 18 July 2025, the Player admitted to the Charges and requested an opportunity to attend a Commission for a personal hearing. He stated that he wished to be represented by Mr. Nick Cusack of the PFA. The Player also submitted a written statement dated 18 July 2025 and a Mitigation and Defence Case Summary.

D. Submissions of the parties

The FA

- 16. The FA's position is that under its Betting Rules, a Participant at Step 4 or above is prohibited from betting on the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of, or occurrence in, a football match or competition, or any other matter concerning or related to football anywhere in the world, including the transfer of players, employment of managers, team selection or disciplinary matters.
- 17. The FA relied on the following evidence: (i) witness statement of (FA Betting Integrity Investigator) dated 3 June 2025; and (ii) transcript of the Interview.

- 18. The Investigator stated that the Player was identified as having potentially breached The FA's Betting Rules. The FA then contacted all UK-licensed betting operators and asked them to share any accounts in the Player's name that showed breaches of The FA's Betting Rules. This resulted in a total of five betting accounts ("Accounts") being shared with The FA by five different betting operators.
- 19. The Accounts showed a total of 354 football related bets made by the Player across 4 separate seasons, with the Player making a total net loss of £469.12 (staking £3,017.49 and with a return of £2,548.37), as follows
 - (1) In the 2019/20 season, the Player placed 38 bets with a net loss of £30.50 (staking £220.88 and with a return of £190.38).
 - (2) In the 2020/21 season, the Player placed 214 bets with a net loss of £411.11 (staking £2,160.94 and with a return of £1,749.83).
 - (3) In the 2021/22 season, the Player placed 77 bets with a net profit of £79.49 (staking £508.67 and with a return of £588.16).
 - (4) In the 2022/23 season, the Player placed 25 bets with a net loss of £107.00 (staking £127.00 and with a return of £20.00).
- 20. The Investigator confirmed that 115 of the Bets included games in competitions that the Player's clubs participated in during the relevant seasons (comprising 210 Championship selections, 50 FA Cup selections, 19 EFL Cup selections and 2 English County Cup selections)
 - (1) In respect of the 115 Bets, the Player made a net loss of £351.00 (staking £678.74 and with a return of £327.74).
 - (2) Of the 115 Bets, 44 had been placed by the Player on his own club (including 8 spot bets) in which he made a net loss of £227.65 (staking £227.65 and with a return of £0). The Player had bet on the following outcomes –

- a. SCFC to win 29 times;
- b. Over 1.5 Goals in a SCFC match 5 times;
- c. SCFC to Draw 3 times;
- d. Double Chance SCFC/Draw 2 times;
- e. SCFC to Win (Draw No Bet) 1 time;
- f. Both Teams To Score in a SCFC match 1 time;
- g. Each team to have 1+ Corner in each half in an SCFC match 1 time;
- h. An SCFC player to Score In 90 Minutes 1 time; and
- i. SCFC U23's to Win 1 time.

(3) Of the 44 bets placed by the Player on his own club –

- a. 43 involved the SCFC first team covering 36 separate matches when the Player was not in the squad. The remaining 1 bet involved the SCFC Under 23's team in a match that the Player was not in the squad for.
- b. The first four bets were placed when the Player was still a scholar at SCFC. The remaining 39 bets placed were placed after the Player had signed a professional contract with SCFC.
- (4) All of the 8 spot bets placed by the Player were unsuccessful
 - a. Bet 20 on 7 March 2020, the Player placed a £5 accumulator which included a spot bet selection on each team to have 1+ corner in each half in the SCFC v Hull City match. The Player's selection involving SCFC was successful but the bet overall was unsuccessful.
 - b. Bet 81 on 2 December 2020, the Player placed a £10 accumulator including a spot bet selection on Both Teams To Score in Wycombe Wanderers v SCFC. SCFC won this match 1-0 and therefore, the bet was unsuccessful.

- c. Bet 132 on 30 January 2021, the Player placed a £10 accumulator including a spot bet selection on Over 1.5 Goals in Huddersfield Town v SCFC. This match ended 1-1. Therefore, whilst the Player's SCFC selection was successful, the bet overall was unsuccessful.
- d. Bet 174 on 13 February 2021, the Player placed a £5 accumulator including a spot bet selection on Over 1.5 Goals in Norwich City v SCFC. SCFC lost this match 4-1. Therefore, whilst the Player's SCFC selection was successful, the bet overall was unsuccessful.
- e. Bet 183 and Bet 184 on 16 February 2021, the Player placed two accumulators for £2.50 and £5 respectively which both included a spot bet selection of Over 1.5 Goals in SCFC v Sheffield Wednesday. SCFC won this match 1-0. Therefore, both bets were unsuccessful.
- f. Bet 197 on 27 February 2021, the Player placed a £5 accumulator including a spot bet selection on Over 1.5 Goals in Brentford v SCFC. SCFC lost this match 2-1. Therefore, whilst the Player's SCFC selection was successful, the bet overall was unsuccessful.
- g. Bet 223 on 21 April 2021, the Player paced a £5 single on one of the SCFC players To Score In 90 Minutes in the SCFC v Coventry City match. This bet was unsuccessful.
- (5) The bet placed by the Player involving the SCFC Under 23's team was also not successful. Bet 23 shows that on 11 March 2020, the Player placed a £5 accumulator which included SCFC U23's to beat Kidsgrove Athletic in the English County Cup. Whilst SCFC won this match 3-2, other selections in the bet lost. Therefore, the bet was unsuccessful.
- 21. The FA referred to the case of *The FA v Huw Lake* which was heard by the Appeal Board on 15 May 2024 consisting of HH Clement Goldstone KC (Chair), Udo Onwere and Francis Benali. The decision set out the approach to be taken to sanction in betting cases –

- "19. The Commission's first decision therefore was to decide what the guideline for this offending, taken in totality, was, as to both fine and, if appropriate, sports sanction.
- 20. Having identified the guideline, its next decision was to decide whether there were factors which merited an increase to or reduction from the 'entry point' [which we understand to mean the lower end of the sanction range].
- 21. Having decided, as it did, that the totality of the breaches and the circumstances thereof, merited an immediate 'ban' [used deliberately instead of suspension for obvious reasons], it was then the task of the Commission to consider whether the penalty [fine and/or ban] should be suspended in whole or in part pursuant to the provisions and principles set out in Regulations 43 and 44 of the FA Disciplinary regulations.
- 22. If, as a general rule, the 'sentencing exercise' is undertaken in this way, it is transparent, open to scrutiny, and unlikely to be capable of criticism or potential review as one which has led to the imposition of a penalty or sanction which is unduly lenient [or severe] within the meaning of the FA Disciplinary Regulations."
- 22. It was submitted that the Guidelines suggest a financial penalty and a sports sanction in the range of 6 months to life, with the following relevant factors to be considered when determining the appropriate sanctions
 - (1) Overall perception of impact of Bets on fixture / game integrity this was said to be one of the most determinative factors of the seriousness of the misconduct, and thus, sanction. The Bets involving the Player's own club made up 12% of the Bets which should be considered a serious aggravating feature. However, the majority of aggravating bets, and the Bets generally, were accumulators and involved fixtures over which the Player had no conceivable influence.
 - (2) Number and size of bets the Player placed 354 bets over 4 seasons with an average size of £8.52. The majority of bets were placed across the 2020/21 season (214 bets).

- (3) Actual stake and amount possible to win the majority of the stakes were £5 (162), £10 (95) and £2 (31). The remaining stakes were within a wide range of £0.63 to £95.07.
- (4) Whether Player played the Player was not in the squad for the 36 SCFC matches he placed bets on. Although this was said not to be a mitigating factor, at the same time, The FA confirmed it was also not considered to be an aggravating factor.
- (5) Fact and circumstances surrounding pattern of betting the Player was candid during the Interview and in his reply documentation as to the circumstances of the betting, namely that it was something he did socially, often with friends who were not involved in football. He did so alongside betting on horse racing and darts. The Player did not consider himself to have a gambling addiction or problem which The FA agreed was evidenced by his ability to stop betting in December 2022 without difficulty. There is no evidence that the Player's betting pattern demonstrates problematic behaviour, for example through financial loss or a decline in his mental health.
- (6) Personal circumstances the Player is currently 23 years old. During the relevant period when the Bets were placed, he was between 18 and 20 years old. Although he is a young participant, he has been at a professional club since the age of 16. The Player has demonstrated a level of wilful ignorance as to The FA Betting Rules. He could easily have come to understood whether restrictions applied to his ability to place bets by searching on The FA's website or making enquiries with his club at the time, especially since he was a scholar and then a professional at an EFL Championship Club throughout this period where mandatory educational training would have been provided by The FA.
- (7) Assistance to the process and acceptance of the Charges the Player fully cooperated with the investigation of The FA and accepted the Charges at the first opportunity.

- 23. It was submitted that the Player has placed 7 bets that bring him within the sanction range of a financial penalty and a sports sanction in the range of 6 months to life, with a further 3 bets against his own team. The remaining bets were significantly less serious. Although the Player did not participate in any of the fixtures, there was a level of wilful ignorance and naivety during the relevant time period that led to him placing a reasonably significant number of bets on football over 4 seasons.
- 24. The Player has admitted to the Charges. The FA further recognised that a period of nearly 3 years has passed since the Player placed a bet on football. This was due to The FA being unaware of the existence of the Bets rather than any unjustified delay in investigation, and was not accepted as a mitigating feature. In considering the appropriate financial penalty, The FA acknowledged that the Player did not profit from his activity.
- 25. During the Hearing, Ms. Deasy clarified on behalf of The FA that the reference to the sporting sanction that the Commission was invited to impose of "6 months to life" at paragraph 3.10 of its Written Submissions should in fact have referred to "0-12 months". It was submitted that the Player's wilful ignorance and the aggravating Bets constituted aggravating factors whilst the Player's admission was a mitigating factor. The FA did not consider that the passage of time since the Player has refrained from betting on football was a mitigating factor. Whilst it did not expressly object to any sporting sanction imposed being suspended, it was submitted that limited weight should be placed on the statement made on behalf of the Player that any immediate suspension would represent a serious risk to his career since this was considered to be largely speculative.

The Player

26. The Player is the third generation of his family to play football professionally. He has admitted to the Charges and taken full responsibility for his mistakes. He stated that all of his betting was recreational and mainly accumulators with modest stakes and modest winnings. No third parties were involved in placing the Bets. The Player started betting on football when he was 18 years old and stopped of his own volition when he was 20 years old.

- 27. The mitigation put forward confirmed that the Player has not placed a bet on football since returning to SCFC in December 2022 from his second loan spell with Dundalk and assured The FA that the Player will continue to abstain going forward. It was emphasised that the betting started as a social activity with friends away from football and became a distraction from boredom. The betting ended when the Player realised that he was becoming a 'proper' professional player. It was stated that he has no previous record of misconduct and has fully co-operated with the FA investigation, admitting the Charges at the first opportunity. Any immediate suspension was said to represent a serious risk to his fledgling career.
- 28. The Player further provided a written statement dated 18 July 2025 in which he stated that he does not recall receiving specific education on The FA's Betting Rules but accepts fully that it is his responsibility to know the Rules. He stated that he opened betting accounts when he turned 18 to fit in socially with his friends away from his football club. However, when he returned, having been on loan at Dundalk in Ireland, he became part of the first team set-up and realised that he could not be betting when he was a 'proper' professional. He confirmed that the Bets were not placed on the basis of inside knowledge and denied having a gambling addiction. He apologised for The FA for breaching the Betting Rules and stated that this would not happen again.
- 29. At the Hearing, Mr. Cusack submitted on behalf of the Player that there were a number of mitigating factors in this case. It was stressed that the Player was young at the time that the Bets were placed which was due to a genuine lack of knowledge by the Player, as opposed to a wilful breaking of The FA's Betting Rules. It was submitted that the amounts staked were modest, the number of Bets made were not prolific, and the Player had overall made a loss. Moreover, the Bets were mainly accumulators and were not placed on the basis of inside information. It was also said that this matter was unlikely to attract widespread publicity given that the Player is not a household name.
- 30. The Commission was referred to the recent case of *The FA v Jamie Jellis* which the Chair is familiar with in which the Player received a sporting sanction of 5 months

suspended for a period of 12 months. Mr. Cusack submitted that a lesser sanction should apply in the present case and stressed that any immediate suspension would have an adverse effect on the Player's football career. The Commission was invited to suspend any sporting sanction that may be imposed. The Player also took the opportunity to address the Commission and apologised directly to The FA.

E. Discussion

- 31. The Commission reminded itself of Rule E8.1 (as per the 2024/25 Handbook and which appears in similar form in earlier versions of the Handbook) which provides as follows
 - "E8.1 A Participant shall not bet, either directly or indirectly, or instruct, permit, cause or enable any person to bet on
 - E8.1.1 the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of, or occurrence in or in connection with, a football match or competition; or
 - E8.1.2 any other matter concerning or related to football anywhere in the world, including, for example and without limitation, the transfer of players, employment of managers, team selection or disciplinary matters."
- 32. The FA's sanctions guidelines ("**Guidelines**") for betting cases charged under Rule E8(b) provide as follows
 - (1) A bet placed on any aspect of any football match anywhere in the world but not involving the Participant's Club competitions attracts a warning or a fine which may be suspended.
 - (2) A bet placed on the Participant's competition but not involving his Club (including spot bets) attracts a fine which may be suspended but not where the Participant has no connection with the Club bet on.

- (3) A bet placed on the Participant's own team to win attracts a fine with a range of between 0-6 months.
- (4) A bet placed on the Participant's own team to lose attracts a fine with a range of between 6 months to life.
- (5) A bet placed on a particular occurrence(s) not involving the player who bet (spot bet) attracts a fine with a range of between 0-12 months.
- (6) A bet placed on a particular occurrence(s) involving the player who bet (spot bet) attracts a fine with a range of 6 months to life.
- 33. The Guidelines provide that the following factors are to be considered in determining whether there should be any increase or decrease from the entry point: (i) overall perception of impact of bet(s) on fixture/game integrity; (ii) player played or did not play; (iii) number of bets; (iv) size of bets; (v) fact and circumstances surrounding pattern of betting; (vi) actual stake and amount possible to win; (vii) personal circumstances; (viii) previous record any previous breach of Betting Rules will be considered as a highly aggravating factor; (ix) experience of the participant; and (x) assistance to the process and acceptance of the charge.
- 34. A key aspect was stated to be whether the offence creates the perception that the result or any other element of the match may have been affected by the bet, e.g. because the Participant has bet against himself or his club or on the contrivance of a particular occurrence within the match. Such conduct will be a serious aggravating factor in all cases. A further serious aggravating factor will be where the Participant played or was involved in the match on which the bet was made.
- 35. The Guidelines make clear that they are not intended to override the discretion of Regulatory Commissions to impose such sanctions as they consider appropriate having regard to the particular facts and circumstances of a case. However, in the interests of consistency, it is anticipated that the Guidelines will be applied unless the applicable case has some particular characteristic(s) which justifies a greater or lesser sanction outside the Guidelines.

- 36. The Commission considered that the number of bets (354 Bets) placed by the Player, whilst substantial was not prolific and took place when the Player was relatively young (between 25 February 2020 to 4 December 2022 when he was 18 to 20 years of age). Although the total amount staked by the Player of £3,017.49 and the average size of the Bets of £8.52 was not huge in amount, this would nevertheless have affected the overall perception of the integrity of the game, especially the Bets which were placed by the Player on his own club.
- 37. The Commission considered that the Player had signed a professional contract with SCFC shortly after the Bets were first placed and had previously been a scholar with SCFC. The Commission considered it is likely that during this time period, The FA would have provided training on the Betting Regulations to the club. In any event, the Player should have taken responsibility to acquaint himself with The FA Betting Rules and indeed, it would appear that he now fully accepts that it is his responsibility to know the Rules.
- 38. The Commission has further taken into account the multiple mitigating factors in this case. The Bets were placed when the Player was relatively young and were done for recreational purposes with no inside information. He has shown genuine remorse for his actions, including taking the opportunity to personally address the Commission at the hearing and offering an apology for his actions which he now regrets. The Player admitted to the Charges at the earliest opportunity and has been fully co-operative with The FA, and otherwise has an unblemished record. Further, of the seven spot bets that The FA had identified could warrant a suspension in the range of 0-12 months, six were placed as part of an accumulator.
- 39. Taking into account the various mitigating and aggravating factors in this case, the Commission is satisfied that a financial penalty of £750 equivalent to just over worth of wages would be appropriate in this case, as well as a sporting sanction of a 3-month suspension.
- 40. The Commission has further determined that there are clear and compelling reasons in this case for the sporting sanction to be suspended, including the Player having refrained from all football related betting activities since December 2022. The FA

does not oppose the suspension of a sporting sanction which the Commission considers to be appropriate given the specific facts of this case. In all the circumstances, the Commission has determined that it would be appropriate for the sporting sanction imposed on the Player to be suspended for a period of 12 months.

F. Costs

- 41. The FA did not seek costs against the Player.
- 42. In the circumstances, the Commission was satisfied that each Party shall bear its own costs incurred in bringing or defending the Charges, as the case may be. The costs of convening the Commission shall be borne in their entirety by the FA.

G. Conclusion

- 43. The Player has admitted the Charges and is warned as to his future conduct.
- 44. The Player is suspended from all football-related activity for a period of 3 (three) months which is suspended for a period of 12 (twelve) months from the date of this decision. The suspended sanction will only be activated if, during the 12-month suspension period, the Player commits a further breach of the Rules which is of a similar nature or is otherwise deemed by The FA to warrant the activation of the suspended sanction. Should no such breach occur during the 12-month period, then the 3-month suspension will lapse without being enforced.
- 45. The Player is ordered to pay a financial penalty of £750.
- 46. Each Party shall bear its own costs in this matter. The costs of convening the Commission shall be borne in their entirety by the FA.
- 47. This decision is subject to the relevant FA Appeal Regulations.

Grace Cheng (Regulatory Commission Chair)

Michael O'Brien

Alison O'Dowd

7 October 2025

London, UK