

IN THE MATTER OF A FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION

BETWEEN:

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

and

(1) STOKE CITY FOOTBALL CLUB; AND
(2) HULL CITY ATHLETIC FOOTBALL CLUB.

WRITTEN REASONS AND DECISION OF
THE INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE
HEARING
ON 16 DECEMBER 2025

Background

1. These are the written reasons and decision made by an Independent Regulatory Commission which sat by video conference on 16 December 2025 to consider the consolidated charges against Stoke City FC and Hull City AFC.
2. The Regulatory Commission members were Mr Gareth Farrelly, Chairman and Independent Football Panel Member, Ms Alison O'Dowd, Independent Football Panel Member and Mr Daniel Mole, Independent Football Panel Member.
3. Mr Nathan Greenslade, Judicial Services Officer, acted as Secretary to the Regulatory Commission.

Stoke City FC

4. By letter dated 3 December 2025, The Football Association charged Stoke City FC with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20.1 in respect of the EFL Championship fixture between Stoke City FC and Hull City AFC that took place on 29 November 2025.
5. It was alleged that following completion of the above fixture, Stoke City FC failed to ensure that its players did not behave in a way which was improper and/or provocative.
6. The FA designated this as Non-Standard Case as the particular facts of the alleged Misconduct were of a serious and/or unusual nature, due to the proximity to the crowd, and/or as Stoke City FC had been issued a Charge for a proven breach of FA Rule E20.1 in the preceding 12 months:
 - Stoke City FC vs West Bromwich Albion FC, 30 August 2025.

Hull City AFC

7. By letter dated 3 December 2025, The Football Association charged Hull City AFC with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E20.1 in respect of the EFL Championship fixture between Stoke City FC and Hull City AFC that took place on 29 November 2025.
8. It was alleged that following completion of the above fixture Hull City AFC failed to ensure that its players did not behave in a way which was improper and/or provocative.
9. The FA also designated this as a Non-Standard Case as the particular facts of the alleged Misconduct were of a serious and/or unusual nature, due to the proximity to the crowd

and/or as Hull City AFC had been issued a Charge for a proven breach of FA Rule E20.1 in the preceding 12 months:

- Birmingham City FC vs Hull City AFC, 18 October 2025.

Consolidated Proceedings

10. The above referenced Charges were consolidated pursuant to Regulation 13 of the Disciplinary Regulations of The FA Handbook Season 2025/26. It was stated on each Charge that the proceedings would be conducted together, and the Charges would be determined at a joint hearing.

Rules

11. FA Rule E20 states that –

Each Affiliated Association, Competition and Club shall be responsible for ensuring that its Directors, players, officials, employees, servants and representatives attending any Match do not:

E20.1 behave in way which is improper, offensive, violent, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting or provocative.

Evidence

12. The FA included the following evidence with the respective charges:

- Report of the Match Referee dated 30 November 2025;
- A video clip of the incident; and
- Essential Information for Clubs 2025-26.

13. The Match Referee stated, in his Extraordinary Incident Report Form:-

“I blew the final whistle on 90+7:55 near to the The Boothern End. I witnessed Hull City 5 John Lundstram run towards the Stoke fans in the corner of The Boothern End and visibly incite the crowd by gesturing a ‘shush’. This provoked Stoke City 26 Ashley Phillips to approach Lundstram to confront him in an aggressive manner. Hull City’s 22 Kyle Joseph then adopted an aggressive attitude towards Stoke’s Ashley Phillips, and this melee caused a bigger confrontation between players from both teams trying to separate their teammates. It’s at this point that a Stoke spectator encroached onto the pitch and was grabbed and put back into the stand by a Stoke safety steward, rather than being led away. Members of both technical areas also came onto the field of play

in the role of what looked predominantly like peacemakers. None of the match officials witnessed any violent conduct at this time.

I cautioned Hull City 5 John Lundstram, Hull City 22 Kyle Joseph and Stoke City 26 Ashley Phillips for their actions in this incident.

Following completion of the three cautions, another melee was apparent, and we as the match officials could not identify who were the instigators and/or retaliators. Again, none of the match officials identified any violent conduct at this time. Hull City captain Lewie Coyle reported to us that he had a coffee cup thrown at during this second incident. Other items were thrown in and around this time too by the Stoke City fans in The Boothern End.

Again, following this a further fracas occurred involving the Stoke City goalkeeper Viktor Johansson and Hull City Manager Sergej Jakirovic which involved several people.

Again, as match officials we are unaware of any violent conduct at this time.

After some period of time, the players, staff and match officials left the field of play. After arriving back in the changing room, Stoke City Head of Safety Operations, Clare Buckley, entered and I explained the above events to the best of my recollection at the time. Clare Buckley stated that the club had advised the EFL of this serious incident. She also advised that the club had felt it necessary to put out an announcement over the tannoy asking for all players to leave the pitch immediately, during these incidents. We as match officials did not hear this announcement.

I would ask The FA to review all footage they have access to. To be clear, no match official witnessed any violent conduct on field”.

14. 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 the written and video evidence in respect of this case.

Replies to the Charges

15. Stoke City FC admitted the charge by reply on 8 December 2025. They did not request a personal hearing and their case was dealt with on the papers only. They submitted a detailed statement setting out their account of the incident, the contents of which were read and noted by the Commission.
16. In summary, it was their position that the incident was the result of the actions of the Hull City AFC player who ran towards the home supporters making a ‘shushing’ gesture with his finger up to his mouth after the final whistle had been blown. The reactive action of their player was to confront him and push him away from the supporters. Two Hull City AFC players had then become involved with one aggressively grabbing their player. There was no reaction to this from the Hull City AFC player, who had appeared to be more concerned with engaging with the

supporters. It was submitted that the majority of individuals involved were acting as peacemakers, and there was no violence, and the levels of aggression were low. It was accepted that the proximity to the supporters was an aggravating factor, however the location of the incident was a direct result of the conduct of the Hull City AFC player.

17. Hull City AFC provided their response on 8 December 2025. They accepted the charge. They did not request a personal hearing, and their case was dealt with on the papers only. They also submitted a detailed written statement setting out their position.
18. It was submitted that whilst their player should not have made the gesture he did towards the supporters, it was submitted it was a relatively innocuous gesture which did not warrant the reaction of the Stoke City player who took issue with this, pushing and shoving him aggressively. This prompted other players to become involved who were seeking to restrain the Stoke City player. The club also drew the Commission's attention to the fan who managed to make his way onto the pitch, slipping in the process, and also the additional coming together of players and technical area occupants from both sides. It was submitted, as noted by the Match Referee, that members of both technical areas who came onto the field of play did so to predominantly play the role of peacemakers. In addition, the Club wished for it to be noted that they apologised for the incident and also admitted the charge at the earliest opportunity.

Sanction

19. The Regulatory Commission viewed the video evidence in detail and gave consideration to a number of factors; firstly, the parties' submissions and then in relation to the incidents themselves - the number of players involved from both sides, the duration of the incident, in this case, both separate incidents, the level of aggression involved and the proximity to the crowd. For completeness, there was no finding as to the level of culpability of both sides. This was a typical case where both sides claim that without the actions of the other, the incident would not have occurred. However, this is a simplistic position in relation to this incident, suffice to say that, but for the actions of the other, there would be no breach, charge or subsequent need to impose sanction.
20. The Regulatory Commission considered previous sanctions imposed on Stoke City FC with regard to breaches of Rule E20 which are detailed as follows:
 - (1) The club was fined £5,000.00 for an incident that occurred in an EFL Championship fixture v West Bromwich Albion FC on 30 August 2025;
 - (2) The club was also fined £24,000.00 for an incident that occurred in an EFL Championship fixture v Plymouth Argyle FC on 20 April 2024;
 - (3) The club was fined £1,750.00 for an incident that occurred in a Category 2 fixture v Wolverhampton Wanderers FC on 27 February 2024;
 - (4) The club was fined £12,000.00 for an incident that occurred in an EFL Championship fixture v Southampton FC on 3 October 2023;

- (5) The club was fined £1,250.00 for an incident that occurred in a Category 2 fixture v Manchester United FC on 11 January 2023;
 - (6) The club was fined £9,000.00 for an incident that occurred in an EFL Championship fixture v Bristol City FC on 15 April 2022; and
 - (7) The club was fined £10,000.00 for an incident that occurred in an EFL Championship fixture v Barnsley FC on 15 September 2021.
21. It was noted by the Regulatory Commission that this is the eighth incident of this nature in the preceding five seasons, one of which was as recent as 30 August 2025. As set out above, the charge was admitted and there was contrition. As to culpability, the reaction of their player whilst not the catalyst, was disproportionate to the actions of the Hull City player and contributed to what ensued. This incident was close to the touchline and as opposed to a hypothetical scenario that an incident may incite a reaction from supporters, in this case, it did. The reaction of the steward was passive to say the least, but it was only for the fact that the supporter slipped and fell over, that he did not make his way to the players. It is fortunate that this was the case. This is aside from the subsequent mass confrontation that took place. Again, the role of many acting as peacemakers was accepted but it involved large numbers of both players and technical area occupants and was unsightly. It does little for the image of the game, in this case a high profile EFL Championship fixture.
22. In determining the fines issued to clubs at this level, the Commission considered the Essential Information for Clubs in relation to such incidents. This was not a Standard Case. It is stated, inter alia, that the maximum fine for Non-Standard E20 breaches is £50,000, the Entry Point being £25,000.00. Furthermore, the Guidance states: - *“for each successive non-standard breach of Rule E20, including E20.1 and E20.2, within a 12 month period the maximum fine shall double and then treble (and so on) as set out”*.
23. Having taken into account the aggravating and mitigating factors, the Regulatory Commission impose a fine of £25,000.00 on Stoke City FC. The Essential Information for Clubs has in many ways tempered the discretion of the Commission. This was the second breach within the prescribed 12-month period. The previous sanction was a standard case, and the club were fined £5,000.00. The entry point for a second breach is therefore, £25,000.00. The Commission accepted the mitigation put forward by the club and were not minded to increase the financial sanction. For completeness, this was the club’s eighth breach in the last five seasons.
24. The same approach was taken with Hull City AFC. The Commission considered previous sanctions imposed on Hull City AFC with regard to breaches of Rule E20 which are detailed as follows:
- (1) The club was fined £25,000.00 for an incident that occurred in an EFL Championship fixture v Birmingham City FC on 18 October 2025;
 - (2) The club was fined £1,250.00 for an incident that occurred in a Category 2 fixture v Swansea City FC on 15 April 2025; and

(3) The club was fined £1,250.00 for an incident that occurred in a Category 2 fixture v Coventry City FC on 3 February 2025.

25. The Commission has addressed the issue of culpability above in relation to both clubs, suffice to say that both clubs contributed to the incident. In applying the criteria set out in the *Essential Information for Clubs 2025-2026* it is clear that this is a second non-standard breach of Rule E20 for Hull City AFC within 12 months, the previous fine being £25,000.00. Therefore, the Entry Point for the Commission is a £50,000.00 financial sanction. It is also the club's fourth breach within 12 months. As above, and considering the mitigation put forward, the Commission were not minded to increase the financial sanction.

Conclusion

26. The Regulatory Commission, having carefully considered the Regulations, have imposed the following sanctions:

Stoke City FC

(i) Stoke City Football Club is fined the sum of £25,000.00.

Hull City AFC

(ii) Hull City AFC is fined the sum of £50,000.00.

Appeal

27. These decisions are subject to the relevant Appeal Regulations.

Mr Gareth Farrelly, Chairman and Independent Panel Member

Ms Alison O'Dowd, Independent Football Panel Member

Mr Daniel Mole, Independent Football Panel Member

22 December 2025