

**IN THE MATTER OF A FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION  
BETWEEN:**

**THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (“FA”) and OMER RIZA (“OR”)**

**WRITTEN REASONS AND DECISION OF THE INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION  
FOLLOWING THE HEARING ON 31 JANUARY 2025**

**Background**

1. These are the written reasons and decision made by an Independent Regulatory Commission which sat by Teams on 31 January 2025 to consider the charge against OR.
2. The Regulatory Commission members were Mr Michael O’Brien, Chairman and Independent Football Panel Member, Mr Peter Fletcher, Independent Football Panel Member and Mr Alan Hardy, Independent Football Panel Member.
3. Mr Michael O’Connor, The FA Judicial Services Assistant Manager, acted as Secretary to the Regulatory Commission.
4. By letter dated 21 January 2025, The FA charged OR with misconduct for a breach of The FA Rules pursuant to Rule E3.1 in respect of the EFL Championship fixture between Cardiff City and Swansea City that took place on 18 January 2025.
5. It was alleged that in or around the 90 + 2<sup>nd</sup> minute of the fixture, OR acted in an improper and / or confrontational manner.
6. It was further alleged that, following the dismissal of OR, OR acted in an improper and / or confrontational manner.
7. The FA designated this as a Non-Standard Case due to the multiple reported incidents of misconduct and/or the serious nature of the reported misconduct

**Rules**

8. FA Rule E3.1 states that –

*A Participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or a combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour.*

## **Evidence**

9. The FA included the following evidence with the respective Charges:

- (1) Two reports of the Match Referee, Mr James Bell, both dated 19 January 2025; and
- (2) Statement of OR, undated; and
- (3) Five video clips which OR considered to show footage which contributed to his eventual conduct
- (4) Response from the FA to OR's statement; and
- (5) Two video clips showing different angles of footage prior to and after OR's dismissal

10. The Match Referee stated, in a Dismissal Report Form:

"In the 92nd minute, with the ball rolling towards the touchline in front of the Cardiff City technical area, the Swansea 17 (Goncalo Franco) ran to attempt to keep the ball in play but with Omer positioned just outside his technical area had little run off area to be able to stop and the two collided. Omer reacted angrily to this leaving his technical area, entering the field of play and attempting to aggressively confront Goncalo in an inflammatory manner but was restrained by a number of his players and coaching staff. I dismissed Omer from the technical area for his actions".

11. The Match Referee also stated, in an Extraordinary Incident Report Form:

"In the 92nd minute the Swansea City #17 Goncalo Franco chased down a loose ball attempting to keep it in play but as he did so collided with the home team manager (Omer Riza) who was positioned just outside the edge of his technical area. Omer reacted angrily entering the field of play aggressively attempting to confront the Swansea player for which he was shown a stage 2 red card. Omer's actions sparked a reaction primarily by his own colleagues who tried to restrain him. Having been shown the red card Omer then lunged in my direction reacting aggressively to the red card that had been issued. No further acts of misconduct were witnessed on field but as per guidelines I am reporting this confrontation for further consideration".

12. OR stated, in a written statement:

“Firstly, in respect of my personal circumstances. As I’m sure you will be able to empathise, the 48 hours leading up to the fixture following the death of my father were extremely emotional and taxing; however, I am certain that I made the right decision to lead the team into this match as normal. I would like to apologise for my reaction to the provocation pitchside; as I’m sure all who have worked with me can attest, this was a circumstantially driven emotional reaction that is very much out of character. Nonetheless, I know my responsibilities and the examples that I must always set to my players and staff. In respect of the aforementioned provocation and coming-together, I’d like to offer my account of the circumstances around it. Swansea Player #17 Gonçalo Franco persisted in making targeted eye contact with me throughout the fixture which can be seen in the clips during the 67th and 76th minutes of the game, [REDACTED]. The same player overstepped the mark with several challenges during the match and I felt that he was waiting for an opportunity to try and provoke me into a reaction. When the player collided with me in the 92nd minute, the force and movement of his forearm can only be described as reckless behaviour and in my mind, violent conduct. There was no attempt by Franco to pull out of the collision. Following my sending off, Franco can be seen smirking and laughing as if the pre-meditated task had been completed successfully. I would ask that the circumstances and video evidence presented here are considered by way of mitigation”.

13. Several video clips showed match footage involving Goncalo Franco when he was close to the Cardiff City technical area. None of them showed anything particularly significant in the view of The Commission, in terms of any provocative behaviour that might be considered as a mitigating factor on OR’s behalf.
14. The FA submitted a statement setting out its position on OR’s conduct, in relation to FA rules, and included a submission on the minimum sanction which should be applied. The FA assessed that this should be a minimum 3 match ban and a fine commensurate with 2 weeks of OR’s football income.
15. Two video clips showed the relevant incidents from different angles. The incident started when OR, who had left his technical area and ventured extremely close to the touchline, was collided into by Goncalo Franco who ran to the ball as it left the field of play. In the view of The Commission, the primary reason for the collision was the positioning of OR. It may or may not have been the case that Goncalo Franco could have done more to avoid the collision. However, in the absence of any certainty about this point, The Commission did not consider this to amount to a mitigating factor on OR’s behalf. The footage showed that OR subsequently charged aggressively onto the pitch and made inappropriate physical contact with Goncalo Franco. OR had to be restrained by several of his players and backroom staff before he was encouraged to leave the pitch. After subsequently being shown a red card for his actions, OR again reacted angrily and had to be restrained from approaching the referee.
16. The foregoing 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.

### **Reply to the Charge**

17. In his reply form, OR accepted the charge and requested a personal hearing so that he could explain what he considered to be mitigating circumstances.

### **Hearing**

18. OR emphasised that he felt Goncalo Franco had behaved in an antagonising manner toward OR prior to the incident. OR felt that Goncalo Franco had taken the opportunity to deliberately barge him when the opportunity presented itself. OR accepted that his conduct fell short of the required standards. OR's father had passed away in the days leading up to the fixture and it was a stressful period for OR.

### **Disciplinary History**

19. The Commission heard that OR has a previously clean disciplinary record over this season and the previous five seasons.

### **Decision**

20. The Commission found the charge proven based on the admission of the charge and the evidence provided. The Commission considered that the behaviour of Goncalo Franco toward OR was not a mitigating factor of any significance. However, The Commission considered that OR's clean disciplinary record to be a mitigating factor as was the fact that OR would have undoubtedly been under additional strain at the time due to the family bereavement that he had suffered.

### **Sanction**

21. The Commission determined that, without the mitigating factors, the overall misconduct would have been assessed at the level of a 4 or 5 match touchline ban (i.e approximately 4.5 matches). However, once the mitigation was taken into account, The Commission assessed that a 3 match touchline ban would be appropriate.

22. The Commission determined that, in terms of an appropriate financial penalty, without the mitigating factors, the overall misconduct would have been assessed at the level of a £5,000 fine. However, once the mitigation was taken into account, The Commission assessed that a £3,500 fine would be appropriate.

23. The sanction for OR can be summarised as under:

- 3 match touchline ban
- £3,500 fine
- Warning regarding future conduct

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

Mr Michael O'Brien, Chairman and Independent Football Panel Member

Mr, Peter Fletcher, Independent Football Panel Member

Mr Alan Hardy, Independent Football Panel Member

Friday 31 January 2025