

IN THE MATTER OF A FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION  
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION

BETWEEN:

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

and

MR ARMANI LITTLE;  
GILLINGHAM FC.

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WRITTEN REASONS AND DECISION OF  
THE INDEPENDENT REGULATORY COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE  
HEARING  
ON 20 NOVEMBER 2025

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## Background

1. These are the written reasons for a decision made by an Independent Regulatory Commission (“the Commission”) which sat by video conference on 20 November 2025.
2. The Commission members were Mr Gareth Farrelly, Chairman and Independent Football Panel Member, Mr Francis Benali, Independent Football Panel Member and Mr Dave Jones, Independent Football Panel Member.
3. Mr Paddy McCormack, Judicial Services Manager acted as Secretary to the Regulatory Commission.

## Charges and Replies

4. By letter dated 18 November 2025, The Football Association (“The FA”) charged Mr Armani Little with misconduct for a breach of FA Rule E1.1 in respect of The FA Cup fixture between Newport County AFC and Gillingham FC on 1 November 2025.
5. It was alleged that in or around the 46<sup>th</sup> minute of the fixture he committed the sending off offence of using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or actions.
6. For completeness, this case was brought under the Fast Track 1 Regulations, found in the FA Handbook 2025/26, which sets out the standard directions for charges relating to Not Seen Incidents and Successful Deception matters proceeding before Regulatory Commissions.
7. The FA relied on the following evidence:
  - a. Email correspondence between an investigator, The Football Association and Mr. R. Martin, Match Referee dated 17 November 2025;
  - b. Email correspondence between an investigator of The Football Association and PGMOL Senior Referee Coach 1, dated 17 November 2025;
  - c. Email correspondence between an investigator of The Football Association and PGMOL Senior Referee Coach 2, dated 17 November 2025;
  - d. Email correspondence between an investigator of The Football Association and PGMOL Senior Referee Coach 3, dated 17 November 2025;
  - e. Gillingham FC Player, Mr. A. Little written observations dated 12 November 2025;
  - f. Email correspondence between an investigator of the Football Association and Newport County AFC dated 3-6 November 2025;
  - g. Application to Chairman of Judicial Panel to Remove Case from Fast Track Regulations dated 4 November 2025; and
  - h. A video clip of the incident.
8. The Charge was admitted by reply on 19 November 2025. Mr Little’s submitted that the automatic penalty was clearly excessive. He provided a detailed witness statement and the written reasons from *The FA v Virgil Van Dijk* case as well as the Appeal Board written reasons from *The FA v Lewis King*, the contents of which the Commission read and noted.
9. 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.

10. In summary, it was Mr Little's position that he was being heavily abused by a section of the Newport County supporters, in close proximity, and the challenges he faced relating to an injury. This was why he had made a gesture towards one particular fan. This was his first game back after five weeks out with injury and he had sustained a further injury just before half time. He was angry and frustrated by this and this heavily influenced his reaction to the fans. He had experienced this before but had not reacted. He was not making an excuse for his actions but seeking to explain the level of emotion he was feeling at the time. He also wished to put forward that he had not disputed the charge, expressed his regret at the incident and apologised for his actions. Finally, he referred to his previous good disciplinary record, all of which was considered by the Commission.
11. Given that Mr Little had admitted the charge, it was the role of the Commission to determine if the standard punishment applicable would be clearly excessive, that being the circumstances of the incident were truly exceptional, such that the standard punishment should not be applied, and the standard punishment would be clearly excessive.
12. As set out above, the provision relating to this can be found in the FA Handbook 2025/26. Under Fast Track 1, Regulation 21 and 22, it is stated that:

*21. Where the offer of the standard punishment is made in the Charge, the Regulatory Commission may only decrease that standard punishment where the Player has claimed in their Reply that the standard punishment is clearly excessive after considering the evidence, the Regulatory Commission will decide whether the claim is rejected or is successful.*

*22. In such cases the Regulatory Commission shall decrease the standard punishment only where it is satisfied so that it is sure that the circumstances of the incident under review are truly exceptional, such that the standard punishment should not be applied, and the standard punishment would be clearly excessive, having regard to the following:*

*22.1 the applicable Law(s) of the Game and any relevant FIFA instructions and / or guidelines;*

*22.2 the nature of the incident including the Player's state of mind, in particular any intent, recklessness or negligence;*

*22.3 where applicable, the level of force used;*

*22.4 any injury to an opponent caused by the incident;*

*22.5 any other impact on the game in which the incident occurred;*

*22.6 the prevalence of the type of incident in question in football generally;*

*22.7 the wider interests of football in applying consistent punishments for dismissal offences.*

13. Having considered the criteria, and whilst being sympathetic to Mr Little's submissions, the Regulatory Commission found that there were no circumstances in this incident that could in any way be deemed truly exceptional. Mr Little had reacted to the crowd and made a gesture, that if seen by the Match Officials at the time would have resulted in a red card.

## **Conclusion**

14. The Commission, having carefully considered all of the written and video evidence impose the following sanction:
  - (i) Mr Little serve the automatic penalty that applies; a two (2) match suspension.
15. Pursuant to the relevant Regulations, this decision of the Regulatory Commission is final and binding and there shall be no right of appeal.

Mr Gareth Farrelly, Chairman and Independent Football Panel Member

Mr Francis Benali, Independent Football Panel Member

Mr Dave Jones, Independent Football Panel Member

21 November 2025