

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Constituent Body (If appropriate): NLD

Venue: Newark RFC

Date: 07/2/23

JUDGMENT

Coach: **** on further mentions in this document.
Club: Keyworth RFC

Match: Keyworth RFC v Nottingham Casuals RFC
Match Date: 19/10/24
Match Venue: Keyworth RFC.

Panel: Tim Bembridge (Chair) Ian Roe (V/Chair) James Armstrong-Holmes
Secretary: Andrew Statham
Attending: Keyworth RFC: **** (Coach), Harry Brooks (Club Captain) Kevin Price (Chairman);, Cavan Kieran (Team Manager).
Observing: N/A

Decision

1. The Panel found that in the balance of probability the coach **** shouted inappropriate words which the Referee understandably mistook as directed at him.

Preliminary Matters

2. The panel introduced themselves and the chairman outlined the procedure. The chairman also asked if anyone had any objections. Keyworth club members introduced themselves, the chair mentioned that the level of proof in these cases is “on the balance of probability” i.e. 51/49.

Charge and Plea

3. That during the game in question **** acted in such a manner and shouted the words “oh come on”, “oh come on Ref”, then, followed by a significant gap the “You f’ing cheats”. The charge was accepted with the caveat that the final phrase was a plural CHEATS implying it was not directed at an individual.

The coaches Case

4. Keyworth RFC submitted a document of events surrounding this charge. The Veo clearly demonstrated that the words use were as described The referee heard the words once and once only. He had been subjected to numerous challenges to his decisions throughout the game despite it only being 13 minutes since KO. This was a final straw for him. However on listening to the Veo there was a definite plural an s on the spoken word cheats. This followed a definite trip on the Keyworth player who was following his own kick through. The match official did not see this trip, or did not see it as foul play. Had he had the benefit of a TMO or looking at the video as the club and panel had we were in no doubt the foul play would have been penalised. Indeed had this resulted in a red card this panel would have considered the video competing evidence.

No inference is intended to discredit the official's reports in any way. Like all match officials he is a volunteer and only had one view of the incident and what he heard he reacted to that immediately. Both reports are excellent in their content and are applauded by the panel.

6. We undertook an assessment of the coach's conduct under Regulation 19.11.8 as facts.

- a) We believed that these words heard made the referee feel seriously challenged.
- b) The offending was spoken and with a raised voice.
- c) There was no actual threat of violence
- d) There was no physical contact
- e) The game was not completed
- f) Immediately following the final whistle and the coach **** understanding the game being ended he approached the referee apologising that his words had caused the situation. He explained what he had seen and said and reiterated his apology. The Veo clearly demonstrated this as fact.
- g) Following his apology the coach **** removed himself from the club premises and went home.

Mitigating Factors

7. We considered the mitigating factors. We appreciate that a lot of this surrounded misunderstanding, mishearing and misconceptions of the incident. The coach **** apologised immediately, he removed himself from the premises in extremely quick time. The club chairman Mr. Price started to go to the coach to state his words were not appropriate weather directed at the match official of the opposition. The club placed an immediate sanction on the coach. They have all relevant posters, code of conduct, pitch respect barriers in position. They have done every thing required of them prior to this incident.

Aggravating Features

8. We considered the aggravating factors under regulation 19. In this case we where of the opinion there was none

Sanction

9. The coach **** has been stood down from coaching since the match. He can return immediately. No further sanction of suspension shall be imposed. He has missed 3 game which the panel considered sufficient.

**** is requested to enrol onto a referees course within the next 12 months.

**** is requested to write a letter of apology to the referee specifically encouraging him to carry on officiating rugby matches.

Costs

10. The club will be invoiced £50-00 by NLD office. It is for the club to decide if they seek recompense from ****

Right of Appeal

11. There is a right of appeal against this decision. Any such appeal must be lodged with the RFU Head of Discipline by 14 days following receipt of this judgement