



**IFA Disciplinary Code**

**Season 2019/2020**

**Adopted by the Co Antrim FA**

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## **The IFA Disciplinary Code is operating within the guidelines of the FIFA Disciplinary Code**

### **Article 1 Adoption and Enforcement**

- 1.1 The IFA Disciplinary Committee (the Committee) adopted this code on 1 August 2019.
- 1.2 This code comes into force on 1 August 2019 and applies to all disciplinary matters arising from and concerning football under the jurisdiction of the IFA.
- 1.3 Save where expressly set out to the contrary, words and phrases as defined in the Articles of Association of the Irish Football Association shall have the same meaning in this code.
- 1.4 The following are subject to this code:
  1. members;
  2. associate members;
  3. officials;
  4. players;
  5. match officials;
  6. licensed intermediaries;
  7. anyone with an authorisation from the IFA, in particular with regard to a match, competition or other event organised by the IFA.
- 1.5 Each person or entity who is or is deemed subject to this code is required to cooperate with an IFA (or a Divisional Association of the IFA) investigation or disciplinary proceedings. Each club is further required to identify to the Association a Club Disciplinary Officer (who may hold another office within the Club, such as Club Secretary) responsible for investigating and taking appropriate action in relation to disciplinary matters and the conduct of its members. The Club Disciplinary Officer will be the principal point of contact between the Disciplinary Committee and the Club in respect of all disciplinary matters. The Club must inform the Committee Secretary of the name, telephone number and email address of the Club Disciplinary Officer at the commencement of the season. In the event that the Committee is not notified of a Disciplinary Officer any communications will be sent via the Club Secretary. Notifications via the Comet system will be sent to the appointed Club Manager. It is the responsibility of the Club Manager to ensure that the Disciplinary Officer is made aware of any matters relating to discipline.
- 1.6 The overriding objective of the Code is to maintain and promote fair play, protect the health and welfare of Players (and others involved in the Game), ensure that acts of indiscipline (on and off the field of play) or breaches of this code are dealt with expeditiously and fairly and that the image and reputation of association football and the Irish Football Association are not adversely affected.
- 1.7 Disciplinary hearings shall be conducted in a fair and just manner and in accordance with the fundamental principles of natural justice. Procedural and technical considerations shall take second place to the overriding objective of being just and fair to the parties. Proceedings, findings or decisions of the Committee shall not be invalidated by reason of any procedural defect, irregularity, omission or technicality unless such defect, irregularity, omission or technicality raises a material doubt as to the reliability of the proceedings, findings or decisions.
- 1.8 In the event that a particular incident takes place for which there is no provision in this Code

including (but not limited to) procedure, jurisdiction or sanction then the Committee may take such action that it considers appropriate in the circumstances in accordance with general principles of natural justice and fairness.

1.9 Without prejudice to the overriding objective set out in clause 1.6, the Committee shall have the power:-

1. to sanction serious disciplinary infringements which have escaped a match official's attention;
2. to rectify obvious errors of judgement in the referee's disciplinary decision;
3. to extend the duration of a match suspension or any other penalty incurred automatically by an expulsion;
4. to impose sanctions including;
  - A fine
  - A suspension;
  - An interim suspension;
  - A transfer ban;
  - Playing a match without spectators;
  - Playing a match on neutral territory;
  - Ban on playing in a particular stadium;
  - Ban from dressing room and/or substitutes' bench;
  - Ban on taking part in any football related activity;
  - Annulment of the result of a match;
  - Expulsion from a competition;
  - Defeat by forfeit;
  - Deduction of points;
  - Demotion to a lower division;
  - Ban on spectators attending a match;
  - Ban prohibiting someone from entering the confines of one or several stadiums ("Stadium Ban");
  - Replay of a match;
  - A reprimand being an official written pronouncement of disapproval sent to the perpetrator of an infringement of the Code.

1.10 The Committee may recognise the disciplinary sanctions of any other sporting body. Any person suspended or banned by any other sporting body may be suspended or banned concurrently by the Committee.

1.11 Whilst the Committee shall at all times strive to act consistently, the Committee shall not have a doctrine of binding precedent, that is to say it is not formally bound by prior decisions of the Committee. Each case will be looked at and determined on its own merits.

1.12 If several offences are carried out by an individual simultaneously, the Committee shall base the fine on what it considers to be the most serious offence committed and depending on the circumstances, may increase the sanction by up to fifty per cent of the maximum sanction specified for that offence. The same applies if a person incurs several time sanctions of a similar nature (two or more match suspensions, two or more stadium bans etc) as the result of one or several offences.

1.13 Any clerical mistakes or accidental omissions in any written decision or correspondence on

behalf of the Committee may be corrected by the Committee at any time.

## **Article 2 Definitions**

- 2.1 IFA: The Irish Football Association.
- 2.2 Player: A person whose name appears on the match card for the relevant match. This includes Player Managers or an Official who is also a Player.
- 2.3 Official: A person, with the exception of Players (See Article 2.2 of this Code) who is connected to a football club.
- 2.4 Match Official: The Referee, Assistant Referees, 4<sup>th</sup> Official, Match Observer or any other person appointed by the IFA, Divisional Association or League in connection with a match.
- 2.5 Match Official's Report: A report made individually or collectively by match officials and agreed by them, supplied where practicable, to the Committee and through the referee.
- 2.6 Designated Holiday: A public holiday or bank holiday in Northern Ireland.
- 2.7 Disciplinary Officer: A person appointed by a club who shall be responsible for investigating and taking appropriate action in relation to disciplinary matters and the conduct of its members. It is the responsibility of the Club to ensure disciplinary matters are maintained in the event of the Club Disciplinary Officer's absence by ensuring another individual or individuals deal with any such matters during that period of absence.
- 2.8 Disciplinary Committee: The committee convened pursuant to Article 13 of the Irish Football Association Articles of Association to deal with all football related disciplinary matters.
- 2.9 Disciplinary Committee Secretary: The official appointed by the Irish Football Association to service the Disciplinary Committee.
- 2.10 Disciplinary Department: the members of the IFA staff authorised by the Football Committee to deal with certain routine disciplinary matters.
- 2.11 Appeals Committee: The committee appointed pursuant to Article 14 of the Irish Football Association Articles of Association to deal with all appeals.
- 2.12 Members: Members and Associate Members of the Irish Football Association.
- 2.13 Comet System: means the football management system adopted by the IFA for the administration of football in Northern Ireland.
- 2.13 IFA Website: means the official website of the IFA.
- 2.14 Disciplinary Challenge: means a Mistaken Identity Challenge, an Obvious Error Challenge or a General Disciplinary Challenge pursuant to Article 35 of this Code.

### **Article 3 Gender and number**

- 3.1 Terms within the IFA Disciplinary Code referring to the players, officials or match officials are applicable to both genders. Any term in the singular applies to the plural and vice-versa.

### **Article 4 Culpability**

- 4.1 Unless otherwise specified, infringements are punishable regardless of whether they have been committed deliberately or negligently.

### **Article 5 Acts amounting to attempt**

- 5.1 Attempts: If, with intent to do an act in breach of this Code, a person or entity who is subject to the provisions of the code, does an act which is more than just preparing to commit a breach, he shall be found to have breached the relevant section of the Code.
- 5.2 A person or entity who is subject to the provisions of the code, may be in breach of the Code by attempting to commit a breach of the Code (as described at article 5.1) even if it would have been impossible to complete the act in breach of the Code.
- 5.3 A person or entity who is subject to the provisions of the code, found to have attempted to breach the code pursuant to Article 5.1 will be liable to the same sanction as where the breach of the Code is completed. The Committee may, but is not bound to, reduce the sanction where an attempt is proved. It will determine the extent of the mitigation as it sees fit.

### **Article 6 Involvement**

- 6.1 Anyone who intentionally takes part in committing an infringement, either as an instigator or accomplice, is also subject to the provisions of this code.
- 6.2 The Committee will take account of the degree of guilt of the party involved when deciding upon the sanction

### **Article 7 Failure to Reply to Correspondence**

- 7.1 Any failure to reply, within the specified timescale, (without just or reasonable cause) to correspondence sent by the Committee, either by letter, email or via the Comet system in pursuance of its obligations under this Code, will render the person to whom such correspondence is sent to be in breach of this code and render such person liable to such penalties as the Committee shall deem fit to impose.

### **Article 8 Fines**

- 8.1 Clubs are liable for fines imposed on their players or officials. Subject to the Committee's discretion pursuant to the overriding objective, the fact that a person has left a club does not cancel out liability and therefore does not negate the responsibility of the club to pay a fine.
- 8.2 All fines, unless challenged or appealed against, must be paid within 14 days from the date of the letter or email imposing the fine unless a payment plan has been agreed with the club. Failure by a club to pay a fine within the specified timeframe may result in the club being fined an additional £25 and suspended from all affiliated football with immediate effect from the point of notification in the case of a Designated Holiday, the time limit for paying the fine will

expire the following day.

- 8.3 Should a suspension be imposed on a club due to failure by that club to pay a fine, the suspension will remain in effect until the Monday following receipt of payment.
- 8.4 Match Officials will be fined £10 for late submission of Disciplinary Reports.
- 8.5 Disciplinary Reports must be submitted by Match Officials via the Comet System within 24 hours of the commencement of the match taking place.

### **Article 9 Caution and Dismissal Fines**

- 9.1 Where a disciplinary report has been issued and the person or entity who is subject to the provisions of this Code is found to be at fault, the person or entity shall in addition to any punishment or recommendation made in that report incur a fine as set out below:

#### Players

- Senior and Intermediate matches (cautions and dismissals): £5
- Junior matches (cautions and dismissals): £3

#### Officials

- \* Senior, Intermediate and Junior matches (cautions): £25
- \* Senior, Intermediate and Junior matches (dismissals): £100

- 9.2 Clubs will be charged periodically throughout the playing season for their accrued cautions and dismissals. Notification will be sent to clubs no later than 31 January and 31 May (men's season) and 31 October (women's season)
- 9.3 No refunds of cautions and dismissal fines or part thereof shall be made except where a caution or dismissal has been proven to be wrongfully applied.

### **Article 10 Warning**

- 10.1 A warning is a reminder of the substance of a disciplinary rule allied with the threat of a sanction in the event of a further infringement.

### **Article 11 Reprimand**

- 11.1 A reprimand is a pronouncement of disapproval by the Committee. Where the Committee determines to issue a reprimand, it shall be communicated to the person or entity who has breached the Code in writing or, at the option of the Committee, by email.

### **Article 12 Return of Awards**

- 12.1 When a person is required to return an award, the person shall return the benefits which that person has received as part of winning that award.

### **Article 13 Cautions for players and officials**

- 13.1 A caution is a warning from the referee to a player or official during a match to sanction minor infringements (See Law 12 of the Laws of the Game).



- 13.2 A player or official who receives 2 cautions during the same match will incur a dismissal and, consequently, an automatic suspension from the next match. The 2 cautions that incurred the dismissal will not be included in any total as outlined in Article 13.3, 13.4 or 13.5 of this Code.
- 13.3 A player or official who accumulates 5 cautions in the same playing season will be suspended for 1 match.
- 13.4 A player or official who accumulates 10 cautions in the same playing season will be suspended for 2 matches.
- 13.5 For every further 5 cautions a player or official accumulates in the same playing season a 3 match suspension will be imposed.
- 13.6 In the case of a player manager, all cautions received (either as a player or a manager) will accumulate.
- 13.7 A player who is cautioned after the final whistle and before he leaves the field of play will be dealt with as a field offence. (See Article 13.1 of this Code)
- 13.8 An official who is cautioned after the final whistle and before he leaves the technical area and its immediate surrounds will be dealt with as a field offence. (See Article 13.1 of this Code)
- 13.9 In respect of an official, if an offence has occurred and the offender cannot be identified, the senior coach who is present in the technical area at the time will receive the caution as the person responsible for the other team officials.
- 13.10 Cautions received during one season are cancelled at the conclusion of that season and are not carried over to the next season.
- 13.11 If an abandoned match is to be replayed, any caution issued during that match shall be annulled. If the match is not to be replayed, the cautions received during the match shall stand.
- 13.12 Cautions issued in a match that is subsequently forfeited shall not be annulled.
- 13.13 In respect of the men's game, a cautions amnesty will be applied to players from and including 1 April in any season. The cautions accumulated by players prior to 1 April in that season will not be taken into account in calculating the total number of cautions as outlined in Articles 13.3, 13.4 or 13.5 of this code for the remaining part of the season from and including 1 April onwards. For the avoidance of doubt, the amnesty will not apply to officials.
- 13.14 In respect of the women's game, a cautions amnesty will be applied to players from and including 1 September in any season. The cautions accumulated by players prior to 1 September in that season will not be taken into account in calculating the total number of cautions as outlined in Articles 13.3, 13.4 and/or 13.5 of this code for the remaining part of that season from and including 1 September onwards. For the avoidance of doubt, the amnesty will not apply to officials.

#### **Article 14 Dismissals for players and officials**

- 14.1 A dismissal is the order given by the referee to someone to leave, at any time before, during or after the game, the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitute's bench as outlined in Law 5 of the Laws of the Game.
- 14.2 Dismissal takes the form of a red card for players and officials. The red card is regarded as direct if it sanctions serious unsporting behaviour as defined by Law 12 of the Laws of the Game. It is regarded as indirect if it is the result of an accumulation of two yellow cards.
- 14.3 An official who has been sent off may give instructions to the person replacing him on the

substitutes' bench. The official shall, however, ensure that he does not disturb the spectators or disrupt the flow of play.

- 14.4 A dismissal for a player or official automatically incurs a suspension from the subsequent match even if imposed in a match that is later abandoned, annulled and/or forfeited. The Committee may extend the duration of the suspension.

### **Player sanctions**

- 14.5 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for any offence (other than for receiving a 2<sup>nd</sup> caution) having previously received a caution in the same match will have the caution upheld.
- 14.6 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures will be suspended for an additional 1 match.
- 14.7 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for serious foul play or for violent conduct will be suspended for an additional 2 matches.
- 14.8 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for biting, head-butting or for spitting at an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be suspended for an additional 6 matches.
- 14.9 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for assaulting (e.g. elbowing, punching, kicking etc) a match official will be suspended for a minimum of 15 matches.
- 14.10 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitutes bench for spitting at a match official will be suspended for a minimum of 12 months.
- 14.11 A player who is dismissed from the field of play and its surroundings after the final whistle and before he leaves the field of play will be dealt with as a field offence. (See Article 14.1 of this Code).

### **Official sanctions**

- 14.12 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for any offence (other than for receiving a 2<sup>nd</sup> caution) having previously received a caution in the same match will have the caution upheld.
- 14.13 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for delaying the restart of play by the opposing team (eg holding onto the ball, kicking the ball away, obstructing the movement of a player etc) will be suspended for an additional 1 match.
- 14.14 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for deliberately leaving the technical area to show a) dissent towards or remonstrate with a match official, b) act in a provocative or inflammatory manner or c) enter the opposing technical area in an aggressive or confrontational manner will be suspended for an additional 1 match.
- 14.15 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for deliberately throwing/ kicking an object onto the field of play will be suspended for an additional 2 matches.
- 14.16 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for entering the field of play to a) confront a match official (including at half time and full time), b) interfere with play, an opposing player or match official will be suspended for an additional 2 matches.

- 14.17 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for physical or aggressive behaviour (including spitting or biting) towards an opposing player, substitute, team official, match official, spectator or any other person (eg ball boy/girl, security or competition official etc) will be suspended for an additional 6 matches.
- 14.18 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for use of offensive, insulting or abusive language and/ or gestures will be suspended for an additional 1 match.
- 14.19 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for using unauthorised electronic or communication equipment and/or behaving in an inappropriate manner as the result of using electronic or communication equipment will be suspended for an additional 1 match.
- 14.20 An official who is dismissed from the technical area and its immediate surrounds for violent conduct will be suspended for an additional 2 matches.
- 14.21 An official who is dismissed after the final whistle and before he leaves the technical area and its immediate surrounds will be dealt with as a field offence. (See Article 14.1 of this Code)

### **Article 15 Suspension**

- 15.1 All suspensions must be served with the team at which the player or official received the suspension and must be served consecutively with any other suspensions that may have been issued. Any automatic suspension pursuant to Article 14 must be served prior to any other notified suspension. On request, special dispensation may be given to a player or official if the club (of which his team forms a part) folds during the serving of his suspension or if the team he received his suspension with does not commence their competitive season until after the last day of August in any season. Special dispensation may also be applied in the case of an official who has involvement in a coaching capacity in both a men's and women's club and who concludes the season with an outstanding suspension. Special dispensation may also be given in exceptional circumstances which shall be at the sole discretion of the Committee. Should the Committee consider any application for dispensation to be of a frivolous nature or merely to release a player or official from suspension to enable them to participate in a match, they shall have power to deal with the player and official and or club as it deems appropriate.
- 15.2 A player who receives cautions for more than one team within his club (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> team, 2<sup>nd</sup> team, youth team, etc.) will have his cautions aggregated and must serve any suspension he may receive from the accumulation of cautions with the most senior team he has played for within the Club when he received a caution.
- 15.3 Suspensions shall cover all domestic league and cup matches until such time as the team at which the player or official received the suspension has completed the required number of matches to enable the suspension to be served. A suspension (or part thereof) which has been imposed on a player or official will not be considered to have been served by a match that is abandoned, cancelled or forfeited. Unless, the cause of the abandonment, cancellation or forfeiture of the aforementioned match has been determined prior to the player or official's next game and it is found that the team to which the player or official belongs is not responsible for the facts that led to abandonment, cancellation or forfeit of the match. A suspension from playing in a domestic league or cup match shall preclude the person so suspended from being present in or at the field of play and the areas immediately surrounding the same. The Committee shall have the power to determine where those areas are.
- 15.4 If a suspension is combined with a fine, the suspension may, at the discretion of the Committee, be prolonged until the fine has been paid in full.
- 15.5 Clubs shall be wholly responsible for ensuring that suspensions are served. It is each club's responsibility to ensure the eligibility of their players for any match.

- 15.6 Any period of suspension arising from the accumulation of cautions or additional suspensions in respect of a dismissal will commence from the date of communication from the Disciplinary Department/ Comet System.
- 15.7 Any period of suspension arising from the acceptance of a sanction offer made via a Disciplinary Charge to a player, official, match official, club or league will commence on the Monday following the date of the Disciplinary Charge letter (such date will be confirmed in said letter) sent to the player, official, match official, club or league concerned in writing, by email or via the Comet system. If a sanction offer is not accepted, a Disciplinary Challenge may be submitted as outlined in Article 35.3.
- 15.8 Suspensions imposed by the Committee following a Disciplinary Hearing will be imposed from the Monday after the date of the Disciplinary Hearing. Suspensions imposed by the Committee in circumstances when no Disciplinary Hearing has taken place will be imposed from the Monday after the date on which the decision was made by the Committee. Details of the suspension will be communicated in writing, by email or via the Comet system.
- 15.9 During a standard suspension, a player or official is not permitted to enter the dressing room area, the player's tunnel, the technical area, the substitute's bench, the area immediately surrounding the field of play or the playing surface at any match played under the jurisdiction of the Association until the expiry of the suspension. The terms of the suspension apply from one hour prior to the scheduled time of kick-off of a match and until 5 minutes following the referee having signalled the end of the match.
- 15.10 During a touchline suspension, an official is not permitted to enter the technical area, the substitute's bench, the area immediately surrounding the field of play or the playing surface at any match under the jurisdiction of the Association until the expiry of the suspension. The terms of the suspension apply from one hour prior to the scheduled time of kick-off of a match and until 5 minutes following the referee having signalled the end of the match. A touchline suspension may only be imposed on individuals deemed as officials by the Committee.
- 15.11 On request, an official who is suspended for a cup final in which his club are involved following his 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> sanction in the current playing season may be permitted to lead his club onto the pitch prior to the match and to return to the pitch for the post-match presentation.
- 15.12 A player who is not eligible to participate in a particular match due to the competition rules may not use that match to serve the suspension or part thereof.
- 15.13 Any period of suspension which remains outstanding at the end of the playing season must be served at the commencement of the next playing season.
- 15.14 A player, official, match official, club or league serving any suspension is suspended from all affiliated football including NIBFA.
- 15.15 In the event of the Committee determining that a Match Official be suspended, the Match Official shall be suspended from refereeing or officiating at any domestic league or cup match for a period to be expressed in terms of weeks, months or an indefinite period. All matters of alleged misconduct by referees shall be referred to the Committee and shall not be dealt with by any Divisional Association.
- 15.16 No sanction prescribed in this Code shall prevent the Committee from determining that a person may be banned from taking part in any kind of affiliated football-related activity, as determined by the Committee, where it is deemed reasonable and proportionate to do so.

## **Article 16 Interim Suspension & Partial Suspension**

### **Interim**

- 16.1 The Committee shall have the power by way of unanimous vote, to issue an Interim Suspension against any person against whom an allegation of misconduct has been made and is being investigated or against someone who has been convicted of a criminal offence. The imposition of an interim suspension order shall be notified to any such person in writing, signed by the IFA Disciplinary Committee Chairman, Vice- Chairman or Disciplinary Department. Details of the suspension will be communicated in writing, by email or via the Comet system.
- 16.2 Following the imposition of a suspension, the person suspended shall have the right of appeal within 14 days of notification of the decision to the Committee at a hearing to be convened as soon as is reasonably practicable. The procedure for the disciplinary hearing shall be determined by the Chairman of the Committee.
- 16.3 The interim suspension shall automatically cease:
- 16.4 When the matter has been dealt with at a disciplinary hearing; or
- 16.5 When the allegation is withdrawn and no further disciplinary action is taken; or
- 16.6 After 120 days from its issue, unless the Committee determines that it is in the interests of the Association that it should be extended for a further period or periods of not more than 120 days.

### **Partial**

- 16.7 The Committee in imposing a match suspension, a ban on access to dressing rooms and/or the substitutes bench, a ban on taking part in any affiliated football-related activity, the obligation to play a match without spectators, the obligation to play a match on neutral ground, or a ban on playing in a certain stadium, may examine whether it is possible to suspend the implementation of the sanction partially. The imposition of a partial suspension order shall be notified to any such person in writing, signed by the IFA Disciplinary Committee Chairman, Vice- Chairman or Disciplinary Department. Details of the suspension will be communicated in writing, by email or via Comet system.
- 16.8 Partial suspension is permissible only if the duration of the sanction does not exceed six matches or six months and if the relevant circumstances allow it, in particular the previous record of the person sanctioned.
- 16.9 The Committee shall decide which part of the sanction may be suspended. In any case, half of the sanction is definite.
- 16.10 By suspending implementation of the sanction, the Committee, at their own discretion, subjects the person sanctioned to a probationary period of anything from six months to two years.

- 16.11 If the person benefiting from a suspended sanction commits another infringement during the probationary period, the suspension is automatically revoked and the sanction applied; it is added to the sanction pronounced for the new infringement.
- 16.12 Special provisions may apply in certain circumstances. In the case of anti- doping rule violations, this article is not applicable.

### **Article 17 Disciplinary Charge**

- 17.1 The Committee may charge a player, official, match official, club and/or league who is in breach of this Code. The Committee may also charge a player, official, match official, club and/or league pursuant to Article 17 of the Articles of Association or with any matter deemed to be in breach of the spirit of the Code.
- 17.2 A charge may be accompanied by a sanction offer that would apply to the offence which is detailed in each Article. Any sanction offer will be determined based on the facts and circumstances of the particular incident. Where the Committee is satisfied that the particular facts and circumstances of the incident necessitate a hearing, no sanction offer will be made in the charge letter.
- 17.3 A charge under this Article should be issued within 21 days (or in the case of Divisional Associations within 28 days) from the time the incident is reported to the Secretary of the Committee or as may be extended by the Committee in its absolute discretion. The charge will be accompanied by all relevant evidence, documents and written submissions (including where appropriate the match official's report) that are available to the Association at the time that the charge is issued. In any event the player, official, match official, club and/ or league should be notified within 21 days (or in the case of Divisional Associations within 28 days) of the incident being reported to the Secretary of the Committee of the nature of any incident under investigation.
- 17.4 Where a charge is issued the player, official, match official, club and/or league who is charged may accept or deny the charge.
- 17.5 Where a player, official, match official, club and/ or league accepts the charge and a sanction has been offered the relevant party may accept the sanction; in those circumstances a hearing will not be required. Where the player, official, match official, club and/or league club rejects the sanction they should make representations as to the sanction in writing or at an oral hearing at the discretion of the committee if it is deemed that written submissions would not suffice.
- 17.6 Where a player, official, match official, club and/or league notifies the committee that they deny the charge the relevant party is required to submit a Disciplinary Challenge as directed in Article 35 of this Code.
- 17.7 In any circumstances where a sanction has been proposed by the Committee at the point of charge and within the relevant period the player, official, match official, club and/or league notifies the Committee that they do not accept the sanction offer, the committee shall not be bound by the proposed sanction. However, at the point of charge the Committee must have advised clubs of all potential charges being brought against them.
- 17.8 At all times the Committee shall have the discretion to require the player, official, match official, club and/or league who is the subject of a charge to attend a hearing.
- 17.9 In determining the appropriate sanction in any case, including at a hearing, the Committee will take into account the particular circumstances of the infringement, the conduct of the player, official, match official and/or club within the previous 3 seasons and any other matter which appears to the Committee to be relevant pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 17.10 For the purpose of determining the appropriate charge and sanction at the point of charge the

facts contained in the Match Official's reports will be presumed to be accurate.

- 17.11 Infringements committed during a match may no longer be prosecuted after a lapse of two years. As a general rule, other infringements may not be prosecuted after a lapse of ten years.
- 17.12 Anti-doping rule violations may not be prosecuted after eight years have elapsed.
- 17.13 Prosecution for corruption is not subject to a limitation period.

#### **Article 18 Misconduct by Players, Officials or Match Officials (Outside Law 12 of the Laws of the Game)**

- 18.1 Any player or official who is dismissed will automatically incur a suspension from the subsequent match even if imposed in a match that is later abandoned, annulled and/or forfeited. Any automatic suspension will be in addition to suspensions imposed under Article 18.
- 18.2 Where a player, official or match official is found to be guilty of any of the charges specified in Article 18.3 to Article 18.9 (inclusive) it is recommended that such player, official or match official (a match official may only be sanctioned by the Disciplinary Committee) will be sanctioned in the terms set out in Article 18.3 to Article 18.9 (inclusive) and where a player, official or match official is found to be guilty of any of the charges specified in Articles 18.10 to 18.19 (inclusive) such player, official or match official (a match official may only be sanctioned by the Disciplinary Committee) will be sanctioned in the terms set out in Articles 18.10 to 18.19 (inclusive).
- 18.3 A player who is reported for the 1<sup>st</sup> occasion for misconduct will be sanctioned with a minimum 1 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on the player's club.
- 18.4 A player who is reported for the 2<sup>nd</sup> occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a minimum 2 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on the player's club.
- 18.5 A player who is reported for a 3<sup>rd</sup> or subsequent occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a minimum 4 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on the player's club.
- 18.6 If part of the report relates to cautions or dismissals of players or officials, that part will be dealt with in accordance with Article 13 and 14 of the IFA Disciplinary Code.
- 18.7 An official who is reported for the 1<sup>st</sup> occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a minimum 1 match touchline suspension and a £100 fine imposed on the official's club or in the case of a match official a fine of £100 and may be suspended pursuant to Article 15.15
- 18.8 An official who is reported for the 2<sup>nd</sup> occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a minimum 2 match touchline suspension and a £100 fine imposed on the official's club or in the case of a match official a fine of £200 and they may be suspended pursuant to Article 15.15
- 18.9 An official who is reported for a 3<sup>rd</sup> or subsequent occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a minimum 4 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on the official's club or in the case of a match official a fine of £500 and they may be suspended pursuant to Article 15.15
- 18.10 A player or official who is reported for unsporting conduct towards an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be sanctioned with a minimum 1 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on their club.

- 18.11 A player or official who is reported for deliberately receiving a yellow or red card (in order to be suspended for an upcoming match and to ultimately have a clean record) will be sanctioned with a minimum 1 match standard suspension and £100 imposed on their club.
- 18.12 A player or official who acts with obvious intent to cause a match official to make an incorrect decision or supporting his error of judgement and thereby causing him to make an incorrect decision will be sanctioned with a minimum 2 match standard suspension and £100 imposed on their club.
- 18.13 A player or official who is reported for assault (elbowing, punching and kicking etc) or battery of an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be sanctioned with a minimum 3 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.14 A player or official who is reported for biting, head-butting or spitting at an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be sanctioned with a minimum 6 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.15 A player or official who is reported for unsporting conduct towards a match official will be sanctioned with a minimum 4 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.16 A player or official who is reported for assaulting (elbowing, punching, kicking etc) a match official will be sanctioned with a minimum 15 match standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.17 An official who is reported for biting, head-butting or spitting at a match official will be sanctioned with a minimum 12 month standard suspension and a £100 fine imposed on their club.
- 18.18 The sanctions described in Article 18.13, 18.14 and 18.15 may also apply in cases of misconduct against officials of clubs, leagues, divisional associations or the IFA.
- 18.19 A match official who is reported for assaulting any person shall be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £100 and may be suspended in accordance with Article 15.15.
- 18.20 A match official who is reported for misconduct or reported for unsporting conduct towards a player, official or any other person may be suspended by the Committee in accordance with this Code.

#### **Article 19 Media & Social Media Comments/ Content**

- 19.1 A reprimand, suspension or fine may be issued to leagues, clubs, players, officials and match officials in the case of inappropriate comments or content in the media or social media.
- 19.2 If a player or official makes comments or posts content in the media or social media in which (a) they imply bias, question integrity and/or bring the game into disrepute or (b) are abusive, offensive and/or insulting and such comments are considered to be football related, they will be sanctioned with a minimum 1 match suspension and a minimum fine of £100 which will be imposed on their club.
- 19.3 If a match official makes comments or posts content in the media or social media in which they (a) bring the game into disrepute or (b) are abusive, offensive and/or insulting and such comments are considered to be football related they will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £100 and may be suspended pursuant to Article 15.15
- 19.4 The Committee may issue a sanction in the case of repeat offences by players, officials or match officials.



## **Article 20 Inciting hatred and violence**

- 20.1 A player or official who publicly incites others to hatred or violence will be sanctioned with a suspension for no less than six months and with a minimum fine of £250 which will be imposed on their club.
- 20.2 In serious cases, in particular when the infringement is committed using the mass media (such as the press, radio or television) or if it takes place on a match day in or around a stadium, the minimum fine will be £1000 which will be imposed on their club. A suspension for no less than six months will also be imposed.

## **Article 21 Provoking the general public**

- 21.1 A player or official who provokes the general public during a match will be sanctioned with a minimum suspension of two matches and with a minimum fine of £250 which will be imposed on their club.

## **Article 22 Ineligibility through suspension**

- 22.1 If any player participates in a match whilst being suspended or if any player breaches the terms of his suspension his club will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £600 (imposed on Senior Clubs), £450 (imposed on Intermediate Clubs) and £350 (imposed on Junior Clubs). Additionally, the Club will forfeit the match by the score 3-0. If the goal difference at the end of the match is greater than three in favour of the club who is not to forfeit the match, the result on the pitch is upheld.
- 22.2 A match suspension is regarded as no longer pending if a match is retroactively forfeited because a player took part in a match despite being ineligible. This also applies to the match suspension imposed on the player who took part in the match despite being ineligible.
- 22.3 If any official who participates in a match whilst being suspended or if the official breaches the terms of his suspension his club will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £600 (imposed on Senior Clubs), £450 (imposed on Intermediate Clubs) and £350 (imposed on Junior Clubs) and/ or a further period of suspension.
- 22.4 The timeframe for payment of a fine may be extended if a club can produce to the Committee evidence of severe financial hardship. A payment plan may be agreed with the Committee pursuant to Article 8.2.

## **Article 23 Abandonment**

- 23.1 If a club is found to have caused the abandonment of a match it will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £200. The competition organiser will decide on the outcome of the match following the outcome of any disciplinary inquiry into the abandonment.

## **Article 24 Brawl**

- 24.1 A brawl is defined as three or more people who participate in serious Violent Conduct. Anyone who participates in a brawl will be sanctioned with a suspension of at least six matches.
- 24.2 Anyone who tried merely to prevent a fight, shield others or separate those involved in a brawl is not subject to punishment.

## **Article 25 Unidentified aggressors**

- 25.1 If, in the case of an act of violence or threat of violence (physical or verbal), it is not possible to identify the perpetrator(s), the Committee may sanction the club to which the aggressors are deemed to belong.

## **Article 26 Team misconduct**

- 26.1 Disciplinary measures may be imposed on clubs where a team fails to conduct itself properly. In particular, a fine may be imposed where several players or officials from the same team threaten or harass match officials or other persons. Further sanctions may be imposed in the case of serious offences

## **Article 27 Discrimination**

- 27.1 Anyone who offends the dignity of a person or group of persons through contemptuous, discriminatory or denigratory words or actions concerning race, colour, language, religion or origin shall be suspended for at least ten matches. Furthermore, a stadium ban and a fine shall be imposed. Where the perpetrator is a player a minimum fine of £500 will be imposed on senior clubs, £250 imposed on intermediate clubs and £150 imposed on junior clubs. If the perpetrator is an official, the fine imposed shall be a minimum of £1000 on senior clubs, £450 on intermediate clubs and £250 on junior clubs.
- 27.2 Anyone who offends the dignity of a person or group of persons through contemptuous, discriminatory or denigratory words or actions concerning disability, gender or sexual orientation shall be suspended for a minimum of ten matches. Furthermore, a stadium ban and a fine shall be imposed. Where the perpetrator is a player a minimum fine of £500 will be imposed on senior clubs, £250 imposed on intermediate clubs and £150 imposed on junior clubs. If the perpetrator is an official, the fine imposed shall be a minimum of £1000 on senior clubs, £450 on intermediate clubs and £250 on junior clubs.
- 27.3 In determining whether the dignity of a person or group of persons has been offended, the Committee will be entitled to draw reasonable inferences, that is to say, there is no requirement to identify an individual who was offended at the time the comment was made or published. In finding a matter to be proved, it will open to the Committee to conclude that by their very nature, the comments made offend the dignity of a person or group of persons. In the event that an individual is identified as a direct addressee of potential discriminatory behaviour, he or she may be invited by the committee to make an oral or written victim impact statement.
- 27.4 Where several persons (officials and/ or player) from the same Club or association simultaneously breach Article 27.1 or 27.2 or there are other aggravating circumstances, the team concerned may be deducted three points for a first offence and six points for a second offence; a further offence may result in relegation to a lower division. In the case of matches in which no points are awarded, the team may be disqualified from the competition.
- 27.5 Where supporters of a team breach Article 27.1 or Article 27.2 at a match, a minimum fine of £1000 shall be imposed on senior clubs, £450 on intermediate clubs and £250 on junior clubs regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight unless the club proves to the Committee that exceptional circumstances exist in which case the fine may be reduced. In determining the appropriate sanction, the Committee will be entitled to take into account actions taken by the club to prevent such behaviour occurring in addition to previous occurrences of such behaviour which have at any time come to the attention of the Committee. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall interfere with the Committee's power to impose any of the sanctions outlined in paragraph 1.9 of this Code.
- 27.6 The Committee will be guided by the terms of Article 33 of this Code in determining whether supporters have acted in a manner in contravention of this Article.

- 27.7 The offences and fines referred to in these clauses are not exhaustive and the Committee is empowered to levy additional sanctions after taking into account the seriousness of the offences. Without prejudice to the generality of this, these additional sanctions could include, an order to play a match behind closed doors, playing a match with a limited number of spectators, the forfeit of a match, a point's deduction or disqualification from the competition.
- 27.8 Spectators who breach Article 27.1 or 27.2 shall receive a stadium ban of a minimum of 2 years.
- 27.9 Unless there are exceptional circumstances, if a match is abandoned by the referee because of racist and/or discriminatory conduct, the match shall be declared forfeited.

#### **Article 28 Threats**

- 28.1 A player or official who intimidates a match official with serious threats will be sanctioned with a minimum suspension for 10 matches and with a minimum fine of £150 which will be imposed on their club.

#### **Article 29 Coercion or Undue Influence**

- 29.1 A player or official who uses violence or threats to pressurise a match official into taking certain action or to hinder him in any other way from acting freely will be sanctioned with a minimum suspension for 4 matches and with a minimum fine of £150 which will be imposed on their club.
- 29.2 A player or official who unduly seeks to influence or pressurise a match official to review match footage before submitting a Disciplinary Challenge pursuant to Article 35 will be sanctioned with a minimum suspension of four matches and a minimum fine of £150 will be imposed upon their Club.

#### **Article 30 Forgery and Falsification**

- 30.1 Anyone who, in football-related activities, forges a document, falsifies an authentic document or uses a forged or falsified document may be sanctioned with a fine as determined by the Committee.
- 30.2 If the perpetrator is a player, that player in addition to any other sanction imposed by the Committee, may be suspended for at least six matches.
- 30.3 If the perpetrator is an official, a player's agent or an intermediary, that official, player's agent or intermediary may in addition to any other sanction imposed by the committee be subject to a ban on taking part in any football- related activity for a period of at least 12 months.
- 30.4 If the perpetrator is an association or a club, that association or club may in addition to any other sanction imposed by the Committee, be subject to an expulsion from a competition or a fine.
- 30.5 A club may be held liable for an infringement as defined in Article 30.1 committed by one of its officials and/or players. In such a case, an expulsion from a competition and/or a transfer ban may be pronounced in addition to a fine for the club concerned.

#### **Article 31 Corruption**

- 31.1 Anyone who offers, promises or grants an unjustified advantage to a body of FIFA, a match official, a player or an official on behalf of himself or a third party in an attempt to incite it or him to violate the regulations of FIFA, will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £1,500, a ban on taking part in any football related activity for a maximum of 2 years and a ban on entering any stadium for a maximum of 2 years

- 31.2 Passive corruption (soliciting, being promised or accepting an unjustified advantage) will be sanctioned in the same manner.

### **Article 32 Unlawfully influencing match results**

- 32.1 Anyone who conspires or attempts to influence the result of a match in a manner contrary to sporting ethics will be sanctioned with a maximum suspension of 2 years and a fine of £1,500. In serious cases a lifetime ban on taking part in any football related activity may be imposed.
- 32.2 In the case of a player or official unlawfully influencing the result of a match, the club or association to which the player or official belongs may be fined. Serious offence may be sanctioned with expulsion from a competition, relegation to a lower division, a point's deduction and the return of awards.

### **Article 33 Liability for spectator conduct**

- 33.1 The home club is liable for any improper conduct among spectators, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight and depending on the circumstances, may be fined. Further sanctions outlined in Article 1.9 of this code may be imposed in the case of serious disturbances.
- 33.2 The visiting club is liable for improper conduct among its own group of spectators, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight and depending on the circumstances, may be fined. Further sanctions outlined in Article 1.9 of this Code may be imposed. Spectators occupying the away sector of a ground are regarded as the visiting club's supporters, unless proven by the club to the contrary.
- 33.3 Improper conduct includes, but is not limited to, violence towards persons or objects, letting off incendiary devices or causing explosions, throwing missiles, the use of laser pens, displaying insulting slogans in any form, uttering insulting word(s) or sound(s), using offensive gestures or invading the pitch.
- 33.4 The liability described in article 33.1 and 33.2 also includes matches played on neutral grounds, especially during the semi-final or final of a competition. Should a semi-final or final of a competition be played at the stadium of one of the competing clubs, the club playing at their own stadium will be considered the home club.
- 33.5 The Committee may determine that repeated infringements of Articles 33.1 and 33.2 will attract further sanctions.

### **Article 34 Anti Doping**

- 34.1 Doping is prohibited. Doping and anti-doping rule violations are defined in the FIFA Anti-Doping Regulations and sanctioned in accordance with the FIFA Anti- Doping Regulations and the FIFA Disciplinary Code.

### **Article 35 Disciplinary Challenges**

#### **35.1 Mistaken Identity Challenge**

- In the case of a purported mistaken identity where a player or official is cautioned or dismissed in a match or reported as being cautioned or dismissed in a match, a player, official or club may submit a Mistaken Identity Challenge on Form DCC2 annexed to this Code. The Mistaken Identity Challenge must be in the prescribed form and submitted via the Comet system within

four days after the date of communication from the IFA Disciplinary Department/ Comet System. In the case where the deadline for submission of the Mistaken Identity Challenge expires on a Designated Holiday the time period specified above will be extended to the day immediately following the said Designated Holiday. Where a Mistaken Identity Challenge is submitted in these circumstances the Committee will deal with each Mistaken Identity Challenge as it considers appropriate in the circumstances. In any event the club should make available to the Committee evidence that a mistaken identity has been established. At any hearing, the Committee will require the attendance of both the player reported as having been cautioned or dismissed by a match official and the player, the club allege ought to have been cautioned or dismissed. The player whom it is said ought to have been cautioned or dismissed should be on notice that the Committee may, if proven that mistaken identity has occurred, take action in relation to that player at the hearing and therefore be provided with all relevant documentation in the possession of the club.

- Where a player, official or club wish to submit a Mistaken Identity Challenge a deposit of £100 must be lodged with the IFA no later than seven days after the date of communication from the IFA Disciplinary Department/ Comet System. This sum shall be returnable only where a Mistaken Identity Challenge is either successful or not heard. The Committee reserves the right to retain the deposit where the club is found to have caused the mistaken identity.

### **35.2 Obvious Error Challenge**

- In the circumstances that a player or a club consider that the player or official has been wrongfully dismissed from the field of play on the basis of an obvious error of judgment in the referee's disciplinary decision, a player, official or club may submit an Obvious Error Challenge on form DCC3 annexed to this code. For the avoidance of doubt, a player, official or club may only challenge a direct red card. The Disciplinary Challenge must be in the prescribed form and submitted via the Comet system within two days after the date on which the error allegedly occurred took place. In the case where the deadline for submission of the Disciplinary Challenge expires on the Designated Holiday the time period specified above will be extended to the day immediately following the said Designated Holiday. Where an Obvious Error Challenge is submitted in these circumstances, the Committee will deal with each challenge as it considers appropriate in the circumstances. In any event the club must make available to the Committee all evidence on which it seeks to rely that there has been an obvious error in the referee's disciplinary decision. The Committee will initially consider the Challenge on the basis of the papers that have been submitted to the Committee by the Club to determine if it has merit. If the Committee determines that the challenge has no merit or that there is insufficient evidence, the challenge will be rejected. Other than in exceptional circumstances, video evidence must be made available to the Committee. If the Challenge proceeds to a hearing, the Committee will require the attendance of both the player or official reported as having been dismissed by the match official and all witnesses on behalf of the club.
- Where a player, official or club wish to submit an Obvious Error Challenge a deposit of £500 for Senior Clubs, £350 for Intermediate Clubs or £250 for Junior Clubs must be lodged with the IFA with the DCC3 form no later than two days after the date of the match on which the alleged error took place. This sum shall be returnable only where the Obvious Error Challenge is either successful or not heard. If an Obvious Error Challenge is accepted by the Committee and subsequently withdrawn, the deposit will not be returned.
- On receipt of an Obvious Error Challenge and providing that it is in order, any sanction offered or issued in respect of the challenge decision including for the avoidance of doubt any automatic suspension that would normally follow, that decision, will be suspended pending the determination of the Challenge.
- If the Committee's decision is to reject the Obvious Error Challenge, it will, in every case go on to consider whether or not the player's punishment should be increased. In addition, if an Obvious Error Challenge is unsuccessful, the player and his club may be held liable for all or part of the expenses of the procedure. Should the Committee consider any Obvious Error Challenge to be of a frivolous nature or merely to release a player or official from suspension to enable them to participate in a match they shall have power to deal with the player and official and or club as it deems appropriate.

### 35.3 General Disciplinary Challenge

- A player, official, match official or club may submit a General Disciplinary Challenge on form DCC1 annexed to this Code in the case of any Disciplinary Charge having been issued against him or it by the Committee pursuant to Article 17 of this Code. The General Disciplinary Challenge must be made in the prescribed form and submitted via the Comet system within four days after the date the Disciplinary Charge has been issued by the IFA Disciplinary Department/ Comet System to the person or club concerned. In the case where the deadline for submission of the General Disciplinary Challenge expires on a Designated Holiday the time period specified above will be extended to the day immediately following the said Designated Holiday.
- A deposit of £100 must be lodged with the IFA no later than seven days after the date the Disciplinary Charge has been issued where the Disciplinary Charge or sanction is challenged. This sum shall be returnable only where the General Disciplinary Challenge is either successful or not heard.
- In lodging a General Disciplinary Challenge, the player, official, match official or club must state fully in writing the grounds for the challenge and provide the Committee with copies of all evidence, documents and written submissions which the player, official and or club intends to rely on along with the reply to the Disciplinary Charge within the timeframe required. Additional evidence may also be considered by the Committee provided that such evidence is submitted as soon as reasonably practicable.

### 35.4 Provisions in relation to all Disciplinary Challenges

- On receipt of a Disciplinary Challenge and providing that the player, official or club have received written notification from the Committee that the Disciplinary Challenge is in order, any sanction (including for the avoidance of doubt any automatic suspension) offered or issued will be suspended pending the determination of the Disciplinary Challenge.
- Any suspensions that may be the subject of a Disciplinary Challenge shall not be suspended until the Disciplinary Challenge lodged as directed in accordance with this Article (including the payment of the appropriate deposit) and the player, official or match official or club concerned have received written notification from the Committee that the Disciplinary Challenge is in order. When a player, official or match official facing a suspension participates or officiates at a match without such written notification from the Committee, the Committee will issue the appropriate charge against the player, official or match official concerned for participating or officiating in a match whilst being ineligible.
- Disciplinary Challenges must meet the requirements of this Article to be considered by the Committee.
- No Disciplinary Challenges will be heard against cautions or dismissals except in the case of a Mistaken Identity Challenge (cautions and dismissals) or an Obvious Error Challenge (direct red cards only).
- If the Disciplinary Challenge is unsuccessful, the player, match official, official and or his club may be held liable in all, or in part of the expenses of the Disciplinary Challenge procedure. Should the Committee consider any Disciplinary Challenge to be of a frivolous nature or merely to release a player or official or match official from suspension to enable them to participate or officiate in a match it shall have the power to deal with the player, the match official, the official and/or club as it deems appropriate.
- In the case that a sanction has been issued, a Disciplinary Challenge may be withdrawn by a player, official, match official or club prior to any hearing provided the suspension timeframe (detailed in Article 15.7 of this Code) has not passed. Should a player, official or a club wish to withdraw a Disciplinary Challenge they must notify the Disciplinary Committee Secretary of such withdrawal in writing. Upon receipt of such notification, the Disciplinary Challenge will be deemed to be abandoned and the sanction offer against which the player, official, match official or club had challenged will be imposed from the following Monday, subject to the overriding

objective. The player or official's club may be held liable in all or in part for the expenses of the Disciplinary Challenge procedure.

- All Disciplinary Challenges must be submitted with the relevant disciplinary authority of the Divisional Associations which issued the sanction or charge in question.
- The Disciplinary Committee reserves the right to deal with any issues that arise outside of the referee's attention.

### **Article 36 Hearings**

36.1 The Committee shall have the power to conduct a hearing in the following circumstances:

- When a player, official, match official or club lodges a Disciplinary Challenge (ie. A Mistaken Identity Challenge, an Obvious Error Challenge or a General Disciplinary Challenge)
- When the Committee otherwise deems appropriate to do so pursuant to the over-riding objective.

36.2 The Committee shall have the power to direct the attendance of any player, official, match official or representatives of any club to attend at a hearing convened pursuant to this Article. The Committee shall notify any person directed to attend of the date, time and place of the hearing if their attendance is required. It shall be the duty of the persons whose attendance is directed to inform the Committee immediately of any difficulty in attending a hearing. The Committee will be guided by the requirement to have the matters dealt with in accordance with the overriding objective. In the event of a person or club whose attendance has been directed does not attend, the Committee will be entitled to draw any inference it deems appropriate by their failure to attend when reasonable notice has been provided and / or to issue a charge against that person or club pursuant to Article 36.11.

36.3 Should a referee fail to attend a hearing without just or reasonable cause, the Committee has the discretion to report the individual to the referee's committee to take whatever action they feel appropriate in the circumstances.

36.4 The Committee shall have the power to direct that any person required to attend, produce documentation or items which in the opinion of the Committee would assist them in their determination of any issue at the hearing. In the case of a match official, it will be incumbent upon the match official to provide a full and comprehensive match report, in every case which requires a hearing, no later than seven days before the hearing. The Committee will be entitled to draw any inference it deems appropriate by the failure of any person or club to produce any such documentation or item, or if the documentation or item is materially incomplete, when reasonable notice to produce the same has been provided, or when in the opinion of the Committee it would have been obvious to the relevant party that such material should have been produced to assist the Committee with its deliberations. Furthermore, the Committee may issue a charge against that person or club pursuant to Article 35.4(vi) arising from a player, official, match official or club's failure to produce any documentation or item when reasonable notice to do so has been provided.

36.5 It shall be the duty of anybody or anyone facing any complaint to notify the Committee no less than 48 hours before a hearing of the attendance of any person (including representatives) attending the hearing together with the details of any witness they may wish to call. A club is responsible for ensuring that its players or officials attend a hearing. Failure to notify the Committee will entitle the Committee to exclude any person from the hearing.

36.6 The Committee shall be entitled to deal with any hearing if a person or club, including those who are the subject of any charge fails to attend the hearing, if satisfied that it is pursuant to the overriding objective to do so.

36.7 In advance of the hearing, any person or club appearing before the Committee to answer any

charge must be given copies of any documentation relevant to the facts of the charge which is already in the possession of the Committee and upon which the Committee may rely. Where documentation is received for the first time in the course of any hearing, the Committee will determine, following enquiry of any person or club answering a charge, whether in the interests of fairness time should be afforded to any party to consider such documentation.

- 36.8 If before a hearing it becomes apparent to the Committee that the case will involve specialist (including medical) evidence, or has elements which are unusual or difficult, the Committee may direct that such evidence be served in such a manner that the hearing of the case may be properly and fairly conducted.
- 36.9 The Committee shall be entitled to rely upon audio or video footage, including but not limited to television evidence when considering any case before it. The Committee should, where practicable, identify to any person or club charged of the existence of such footage it intends to rely upon and where the material is not publicly available invite the person or club charged to attend the offices of this Association in advance of any hearing to be afforded an opportunity to inspect this material. The existence of such material having been identified, it will be incumbent upon the person or club charged to make arrangements through the Secretary to the Committee to inspect the material. Where a person or club who is the subject of a charge intends to rely on such material, it will be the responsibility of that person or club to provide copies of the footage which the Committee is capable of viewing no later than 48 hours in advance of the hearing.
- 36.10 The Committee shall be entitled to rely upon any evidence or material which it deems capable of being relevant to the issues before the Committee giving such weight as it deems fit to the evidence, dependent upon its source and its content. It will be for the Committee to determine what evidence it hears and considers.
- 36.11 Where it appears to the Committee that a player, official, match official or club has acted in a manner intended to frustrate the process of conducting an effective hearing, the Committee shall have the power to charge that person or club pursuant to Article 37.13.
- 36.12 If the circumstances so require, the Committee may arrange for a hearing to be conducted by video conference or any other similar method.

## **Article 37 Procedures for the Conducting of Hearings**

### **Principles**

- 37.1 Hearings before the Committee are disciplinary proceedings; the Committee is not a court of law. The Committee shall endeavour, where possible, to abide by the provisions under this Article; however, it shall retain an overriding discretion to act in accordance with the overriding objective.
- 37.2 The burden of proof regarding disciplinary infringements rests on the Association. It is for the Association through the process set out in this Code to present evidence to the Committee and establish a case against a person or club charged. Where it appears to the Committee that the Association has failed to discharge that burden, the Committee shall be entitled to discontinue charge proceedings. In cases of mistaken identity pursuant to Article 35.1, whilst the burden of proof is on the Association, the Committee will be entitled to assume that the relevant match official's identification was correct and best placed to act as they did until such time as evidence is produced by the person or club challenging the decision to displace that assumption. In the case of an anti-doping rule violation, it is incumbent upon the suspect to produce the proof necessary to reduce or cancel a sanction. For sanctions to be reduced, the suspect must also prove how the prohibited substance entered his body.
- 37.3 The standard of proof in all disciplinary cases is on the balance of probabilities. For the avoidance of doubt, there is no sliding scale.



- 37.4 The IFA Disciplinary Committee comprises 9 members. The quorum for the Committee is 3 members, one of whom shall have a legal background. The Committee shall have the power to appoint Sub-Committees as they see fit to deal with all disciplinary matters including hearings. Each Sub-Committee shall comprise of no fewer than 3 members, one of whom should be from a legal background.
- 37.5 During the course of any hearing, all submissions and questioning must be directed through the appointed Chairman of the Committee. During the course of any hearing, the Chairman of the Committee shall, in his discretion, direct the parties on how proceedings are to be conducted.
- 37.6 Where a hearing is convened, all members of the Committee must avoid a situation in which they or any Club that they represent or are associated with has, or may have, a direct or indirect interest that conflicts, or possibly may conflict, with the interests of the Committee or the overriding objective. In particular, no member of the Committee shall be entitled to vote on any matter directly related to or involving the Club that they so represent or are associated with. Members of the Committee must declare any such conflict of interest to the Committee as soon as they become aware of it. It shall be incumbent upon any person or club appearing at a hearing before the Committee to identify at the outset of proceedings whether they believe any such conflict of interest arises. If required, the Chairman of the Committee will determine whether a conflict of interest has arisen and take what steps are necessary to ensure that a fair hearing results pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 37.7 Any person or club charged in proceedings and appearing before the Committee who is of the opinion that they have not been given reasonable notice of the charges or the evidence to be relied upon during the course of any hearing shall be entitled to invite the Committee to consider whether an adjournment should be granted. The Committee will determine whether any adjournment is required pursuant to the overriding objective.
- 37.8 Where notice has been given of a hearing to any person or club charged pursuant to Article 17 the Committee shall have the power to proceed to a hearing in the absence of the person or club charged if they fail to attend at the date and time notified without providing a reasonable excuse. Where the Committee find that the attendance of any person or club charged or required to attend is necessary to properly determine any issue before them, the Committee shall have the power to suspend any such person or club until such time as they appear before the Committee, in which event every reasonable attempt will be made to agree with the person the date for a further hearing.
- 37.9 Any player, official, match official club or league charged will be entitled to be represented at a hearing by a nominee or representative providing notice of the attendance of such persons (including the name, contact details and profession of such a person) has been given to the Committee no later than 48 hours before the hearing. In the event that such notice has not been given, it shall be at the discretion of the Committee to refuse such a person entry to the hearing.
- 37.10 The player, official, match official and/or representatives of the club or league charged shall be admitted to the hearing, together with the relevant match official(s) or other such person who submitted a report or evidence in relation to the charge(s) before the Committee, including evidence relied upon by the person or club charged. It shall be at the discretion of the Committee to refuse any such person entry to the hearing where there has been inadequate notice as directed in this Code.
- 37.11 The Committee shall have the power to require the attendance at the hearing of any witness who is capable of giving relevant evidence on the issues before the Committee. In any case where a witness required by the Committee to attend the hearing refuses or fails to attend, the Committee shall be entitled to take account of any written evidence available from that witness and determine what weight can be attributed to that evidence in the absence of their attendance.
- 37.12 Persons or clubs charged shall be entitled at a hearing to call relevant evidence from any person. Clubs must give notice in writing or by email to the Committee of the name and

contact details of any such witness together with details of the nature of any such evidence, including a written account of that person's evidence no later than 48 hours before any hearing. The Committee shall determine whether such evidence is relevant for the purpose of any hearing and direct whether such evidence may be relied upon pursuant to the overriding objective.

### **Contempt of the IFA Disciplinary Code**

37.13 Where it appears to the Committee that, during any charge procedure, hearing, or in the aftermath of any such procedure or hearing, any party has sought to deliberately mislead the Committee or endeavoured by any means to frustrate the due process of proceedings pursuant to this Code, the Committee shall be entitled to charge any such persons with being in Contempt of the IFA Disciplinary Code. In such circumstances, the Committee will determine whether to deal with such matters summarily as they arise or whether to adjourn pursuant to the overriding objective. The Committee shall have the power to sanction any party found to have been in breach of these provisions by way of suspension or fine.

### **Proceedings at Hearings**

37.14 At the commencement of a hearing, the Chairman shall confirm the identities of the persons admitted to the hearing and introduce the Committee members.

37.15 Before hearing evidence, the Committee shall satisfy itself that the player, official and/or club is aware of the reasons for their presence at the hearing and the nature of the allegations made against them.

37.16 The Committee (only) shall have the power to appoint a Case Presenter to assist the Committee at a hearing when it is deemed appropriate to do so. Such a person must be legally qualified and shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Committee. The case presenter shall have the role of outlining the case, presenting the evidence defined at paragraph 37.18 to the Committee and, at the discretion of the Chairman of the Committee, challenging, the evidence as defined at paragraph 37.19. The Case Presenter will be excluded from any aspect of a hearing which does not involve the presentation of evidence, submissions on the facts or the Committee's determination. In cases where a Case Presenter is appointed, supplementary questions from the Committee shall only be asked by the Chairman of the Committee. As a person appointed by the Committee, the Case Presenter shall be treated by all parties involved in the hearing with the same degree of respect to be afforded any member of the Committee. The Chairman may disengage or direct the Case Presenter as appropriate pursuant to the overriding objective. Any person charged in relation to a case where a Case Presenter is to be used shall be notified of this no later than seven days before the Hearing.

### **Sanction Only Hearings**

37.17 Where in advance of a hearing, the person or club charged has indicated that they accept the charge(s) alleged but wish to make representations in respect of the appropriate sanction, the person or club charged or the representative (but not both) may, at the discretion of the Committee be invited to attend a hearing to make relevant representations to the Committee; the Committee shall be guided by Article 37.23 in terms of the receipt of such representations. Where the person or club charged wishes to call evidence in these circumstances, the Committee will be guided by the principles set out at Articles 37.18 - 37.23. All deliberations and decisions of the Committee shall be guided by Articles 37.24 - 37.30 of this Code. The Committee has the right to hold a hearing in any circumstance that it feels necessary, regardless of whether the person or club charged wishes to make representations in terms of sanction. Parties are encouraged to attend in order that the matter may be dealt with in accordance with the principles overriding objective set out in clause 1.6.

### **Charge & Sanction Hearings**

37.18 The Committee shall first hear and/or consider the evidence available to the Committee including (but not limited to) the evidence upon which a charge has been issued. The player,

official, match official, club or league charged or their representative (but not both) shall be given the opportunity through the Chairman to challenge any such evidence. The Chairman of the Committee shall have discretion to restrict questioning pursuant to the overriding objective.

- 37.19 The Committee shall then hear and/or consider any relevant evidence called on behalf of the player, official, match official club or league charged. The Committee and/or any person appointed by the Committee for the purpose of presenting a charge to the Committee shall be entitled, through the Chairman of the Committee to challenge any such evidence.
- 37.20 The Committee may draw such inferences as it considers appropriate from the failure of any person concerned with any charge to give evidence in accordance with this Code or to answer a question put to them during the course of a hearing. Nothing in this article should be regarded as conflicting with the presumption of innocence in favour of the person or club charged and the burden of proof upon the Association to prove a charge is made out.
- 37.21 The Committee shall be entitled to consider any relevant disciplinary record of any person or Club as part of the evidence in the case. However, the Committee must not come to any finding of fact which is founded singularly or significantly on any previous adverse disciplinary finding. Previous disciplinary findings must not be used to bolster the evidence against a person or club charged when the other evidence is weak or tenuous.
- 37.22 The Committee shall be entitled to receive and consider all relevant evidence including (but not limited to) oral evidence, written statements, television and radio evidence, extracts from social media and other internet- based material. Where a witness purports to give relevant evidence, that person should attend to give live oral evidence. Any statement or letter submitted in the name of any person will be deemed to be from the purported author of such material unless proven to the contrary and can be used against that person by the Committee for any other relevant purpose including separate disciplinary proceedings. Where evidence is not first hand, such evidence will be given such weight as the Committee deems fit.
- 37.23 At the discretion of the Chairman, following the conclusion of the evidence at a hearing, the player, official, match official, club or league and/or their representative(s) (but not both) shall be given the opportunity to supplement any written submission to the Committee and make limited representations on the evidence before the Committee and in respect of the sanction which would be imposed were the charge to be proved. The Chairman of the Committee shall have a discretion to restrict any representations including placing a time limit upon them.

### **Deliberations**

- 37.24 Having heard the evidence and any submissions, the Chairman shall invite all persons other than the members of the Committee to retire whilst the Committee considers its decision in private.
- 37.25 When coming to their determination, the Committee shall do so only on the evidence which has been called, referred to or presented before the Committee at hearing. At the Chairman's discretion, following retirement the Committee may recall the parties to deal with any issue concerning their deliberations.
- 37.26 The Committee shall come to its determination in respect of the charge and any sanction on the basis of a straightforward majority. Where required, the Chairman shall have a casting vote.

### **Decisions**

- 37.27 Following their deliberations, the person or club charged and/or their representatives shall be invited to return before the Committee for the delivery of the Committee's determination. The Disciplinary Committee pass their decisions entirely independently; in particular, they shall not receive instructions from any other body. The person or club charged shall be informed of the Committee's determination, that is to say:

- What charge(s), if any, have been proved
  - What charge(s), if any, have not been proved
  - If proved, what core findings of fact the Committee have reached in coming to their determination on the charge
  - What sanction has been imposed in respect of any charge proved
  - What factors have been taken into account in determining any sanction imposed.
- 37.28 Any person or club against whom, following a hearing, a charge has been proved, shall be notified by the Committee that confirmation of the decision will be given in writing by email to the email address previously provided during the charging procedure. They shall be reminded of their right of appeal pursuant to Article 14 of the Articles of Association both at the conclusion of the hearing and subsequently in writing.
- 37.29 If an appeal has not been lodged by the specified deadline, doping decisions passed by the Disciplinary Committee shall be notified to the World Anti- Doping Agency (WADA). Doping decisions passed by the Appeals Board shall be notified simultaneously to the parties and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). FIFA will announce anti-doping rule violations within 30 days.
- 37.30 The deliberations of the Committee are private and shall not be divulged to any person who was not present during the course of the Committee's retirement. The deliberations of the Committee, including the opinions or votes of any of its members shall not be disclosed. Nothing in this Article shall prevent the Committee from making representations to the Appeals Board if called upon following the submission of an Appeal by any person or club found to have breached this Code setting out the factual findings of the Committee in respect of any case.
- 37.31 Where it is not proved to the satisfaction of the Committee that a person or club has breached this Code, the hearing will be declared closed and the deposit paid by them shall be returned as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 37.32 The members of the Committee will not be held liable for any deeds or omissions relating to any disciplinary procedure.

### **Article 38 Failure to Respect Decisions**

- 38.1 Anyone who fails to pay another person (such as a player, a coach or a club) or FIFA a sum of money in full or part, even though instructed to do so by a body, a committee or an instance of FIFA or a subsequent CAS appeal decision (financial decision), or anyone who fails to comply with another decision (non- financial decision) passed by a body, a committee or an instance of FIFA, or by CAS (subsequent appeal decision):
- will be fined for failing to comply with a decision;
  - will be granted a final deadline by the judicial bodies of FIFA in which to pay the amount due or to comply with the (non-financial) decision;
  - (only for clubs:) will be warned and notified that, in the case of default or failure to comply with a decision within the period stipulated, points will be deducted or relegation to a lower division ordered. A transfer ban may also be pronounced;
  - (only for associations) will be warned and notified that, in the case of default or failure to comply with a decision within the period stipulated, further disciplinary measures will be imposed. An expulsion from a FIFA competition may also be pronounced.

- 38.2 If a club disregards the final time limit, the relevant association shall be requested to implement the sanctions threatened.
- 38.3 If points are deducted, they shall be proportionate to the amount owed.
- 38.4 A ban on any football-related activity may also be imposed against natural persons.
- 38.5 Any appeal against a decision passed in accordance with this article shall be lodged with CAS directly.
- 38.6 Any financial or non-financial decision that has been pronounced against a club by a court of arbitration within the relevant association or National Dispute Resolution Chamber (NDRC), both duly recognised by FIFA, shall be enforced by the association of the deciding body that has pronounced the decision in accordance with the principles established in this article and in compliance with the applicable disciplinary regulations.
- 38.7 Any financial or non-financial decision that has been pronounced against a natural person by a court of arbitration within the relevant association or NDRC, both duly recognised by FIFA, shall be enforced by the association of the deciding body that has pronounced the decision or by the natural person's new association if the natural person has in the meantime registered (or otherwise signed a contract in the case of a coach) with a club affiliated to another association, in accordance with the principles established in this article and in compliance with the applicable disciplinary regulations.

#### **Article 39 Misconduct which has come to the attention of the Committee other than by means of a match official's report**

- 39.1 A club submitting a complaint of misconduct about any player, official, match official or club must submit their complaint in writing dispatched by email to [discipline@countytrimfa.org](mailto:discipline@countytrimfa.org) within 14 days from the alleged misconduct coming to their attention. The IFA will send a copy of the complaint to the club or person who is the subject of the complaint.
- 39.2 A deposit of £100 shall be lodged with the IFA with each complaint pursuant to Article 39.1, which shall be returnable only where it is determined that there is a case to answer.
- 39.3 In lodging a complaint the club must state fully in writing outlining their complaint and include copies of all evidence, documents and written submissions which the Club intends to rely on to substantiate their complaint within the specified timeframe.
- 39.4 A League, Divisional Association, Committee, Committee member or department within the IFA submitting such a complaint of misconduct will not be required to adhere to the procedure detailed in Article 39.2 of this Code. However, such a claim must be submitted in writing with a full explanation of the claim within 14 days of the alleged misconduct coming to their attention. The IFA will send a copy of the complaint to the club or person who is the subject of the complaint.
- 39.5 A Match Official submitting such a complaint of misconduct will be required to adhere to the procedure detailed in Articles 39.1 and 39.2 of this Code. Such a claim must be submitted in writing with a full explanation of the claim within 14 days of the alleged misconduct coming to their attention. The IFA will send a copy of the complaint to the club or person who is the subject of the complaint.
- 39.6 The Disciplinary Committee reserves the right to deal with cases of serious misconduct that arise outside of the referee's attention.
- 39.7 All complaints of misconduct from a club will require full co-operation from the claimant.

#### **Article 40 Miscellaneous Offences**

- 40.1 Where a match official's report indicates that an offence has occurred which is not specified in the IFA Disciplinary Code the Committee reserves the right to impose sanctions within the FIFA Disciplinary Code.

#### **Article 41 Appeals Board**

- 41.1 Appeals against decisions of the Committee must be lodged as directed in Article 14 of the IFA's Articles of Association.

#### **Article 42 Divisional Associations' and NIBFA Disciplinary Codes**

- 42.1 The procedures described within the code may be adapted to suit each Divisional Association or the Northern Ireland Boys Football Association noting that some powers can be administered by the Committee only. However, the fines & sanctions detailed in this code must be adopted for the purpose of harmonising disciplinary sanctions.
- 42.2 Divisional Associations shall be entitled to choose their means of communication when notifying suspensions or charges.