



IFA Disciplinary Code

Season 2011/12

Disciplinary Committee

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Contents

| <u>Article</u> | | <u>Page</u> |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Adoption and enforcement | 4 |
| 2 | Definitions | 4 |
| 3 | Gender and number | 4 |
| 4 | Culpability | 4 |
| 5 | Acts amounting to attempt | 4 |
| 6 | Failure to reply to correspondence | 4 |
| 7 | Fines | 4 |
| 8 | Caution and Dismissal Fines | 4 |
| 9 | Cautions | 5 |
| 10 | Dismissals | 5 |
| 11 | Suspension | 6 |
| 12 | Misconduct by players (Outside Law 12 of the Laws of the Game) | 7 |
| 13 | Misconduct by officials | 7 |
| 14 | Excessive Misconduct | 8 |
| 15 | Media Comments | 8 |
| 16 | Unidentified aggressors | 8 |
| 17 | Inciting hatred and violence | 8 |
| 18 | Provoking the general public | 9 |
| 19 | Ineligibility through suspension | 9 |
| 20 | Abandonment | 9 |
| 21 | Discrimination | 9 |
| 22 | Threats | 9 |
| 23 | Coercion | 9 |
| 24 | Liability for spectator conduct | 9 |
| 25 | Repeated infringements | 10 |
| 26 | Referee | 10 |
| 27 | Disciplinary Sanction Challenge | 11 |
| 28 | Personal hearings | 11 |
| 29 | Procedures for personal hearings | 12 |
| 30 | Misconduct which has come to the attention of the Committee other than by means of a match official's report | 13 |
| 31 | Serious Offences | 14 |
| 32 | Appeals Board | 14 |
| 33 | Divisional Association's Discipline Codes | 14 |

The IFA Disciplinary Code is operating within the guidelines of the FIFA Disciplinary Code.

Article 1: Adoption and Enforcement

- a. The IFA Disciplinary Committee (the Committee) adopted this code on 13 June 2011.
- b. This code comes into force on 1 August 2011 and applies to all football under the jurisdiction of the IFA.

Article 2: Definitions

- a. Player - A person whose name appears on the match card for the relevant match.
- b. Official - A person, with the exception of players (See Article 2a) who is connected to a football club.
- c. Match Official - The referee, assistant referees, 4th Official or any other person appointed by the IFA, Divisional Association or League in connection with a match.

Article 3: Gender and number

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

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

Article 5: Acts amounting to attempt

- a. Acts amounting to attempt are also punishable.
- b. In the case of acts amounting to attempt, the Committee may reduce the sanction envisaged for the actual infringement accordingly. It will determine the extent of the mitigation as it sees fit.

Article 6: Failure to Reply to Correspondence

Any failure to reply to the IFA's correspondence will render the player, official, Club, League or Divisional Association liable to censure, fine or suspension, or a combination of such penalties as the Committee deem fit to impose.

Article 7: Fines

- a. The Committee reserves the right to impose a fine on any club in any case it deals with.
- b. Failure by a club to pay a fine within 14 days from the date of the letter imposing the fine may result in the club being reported to the Committee.
- c. The Committee may take any action thought necessary against a club which fails to remit a fine within the stipulated time frame. This may include the suspension of a club from all affiliated football.

Article 8: Caution and Dismissal Fines

- a. Each disciplinary report, whether a caution or dismissal, shall incur a fine as follows:
 - Senior and Intermediate matches: £5
 - Junior matches: £3

- b. Clubs will be charged periodically throughout the playing season for their accrued cautions and dismissals.
- c. 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 9: Cautions

- a. A caution is a warning from the referee to a player during a match to sanction minor infringements (See Law 12 of the Laws of the Game).
- b. A player 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 Articles 9c and 9d of the IFA Disciplinary Code.
- c. A player who accumulates 5 cautions in the same playing season will be suspended for 1 match.
- d. A player who accumulates 10 cautions in the same playing season will be suspended for 2 matches.
- e. For every further 5 cautions a player accumulates in the same playing season a 3 match suspension will be imposed.
- f. 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 9a in the IFA Disciplinary Code)
- g. Cautions received during one season are cancelled at the conclusion of that season and are not carried over to the next season.

Article 10: Dismissals

- a. A dismissal is the order given by the referee to someone to leave the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitute's bench.
- b. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for any offence will be automatically suspended with immediate effect for 1 match even if he was dismissed in a match that is later abandoned.
- c. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for any offence (other than for receiving a 2nd caution) having previously received a caution in the same match will have the caution upheld.
- d. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures will be suspended for an additional 1 match.
- e. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for serious foul play or for violent conduct will be suspended for an additional 2 matches.
- f. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for head-butting or attempting to head-butt an opponent or any other person other than a match official or for spitting at an opponent or any other person other than a match official will be suspended for an additional 6 matches.
- g. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for head-butting or attempting to head-butt a match official or for spitting at a match official will be suspended for an additional 6 matches. Any occurrence of this offence will also be dealt with as directed in Article 14.

- h. A player who is dismissed from the field of play after the final whistle and before he leaves the field of play will be dealt with as a field offence. (See Article 10a in the IFA Disciplinary Code)

Article 11: Suspension

- a. 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 must be served prior to any other notified suspension. On request, special dispensation may be given to a player or official if his club folds during the serving of his suspension or if the team they received their suspension with does not commence their competitive season until after the last day of August in any season.
- b. 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. If a match is abandoned, cancelled or forfeited, suspension (or part thereof) is only considered to have been served if the team to which the suspended player belongs is not responsible for the facts that led to the abandonment, cancellation or forfeit of the match.
- c. A player who receives cautions for more than 1 team within his club (i.e. 1st team, 2nd team, youth team, etc.) will have his cautions amalgamated and must serve any suspension he may receive from the accumulation of cautions with the more senior team.
- d. No formal notices will be issued for any automatic 1 match suspension in respect of a dismissal.
- e. Any period of suspension arising from the accumulation of cautions, additional suspensions in respect of a dismissal or the implementation of an Article 12 or an Article 13 sanction, where a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge has not been submitted, will commence on the Monday after the 14th day following the date of the match when the misconduct occurred. In the event of exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Committee, the period of suspension may commence at a later date but no later than 7 days after the period outlined.
- f. Suspensions imposed by the Committee following a personal hearing or a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge will be imposed from the Monday after the date of the meeting.
- g. 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. A touchline suspension may only be imposed on individuals deemed as officials by the Disciplinary Committee.
- h. 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.
- i. On request, an official who is suspended for a cup final in which their club are involved following their 1st or 2nd sanction in the current playing season may be permitted to lead their club onto the pitch prior to the match and to return to the pitch for the post match presentation.
- j. The Committee reserves the right to impose a stadium ban in the event of incidents of a sufficiently serious nature.

- k. In the event of a suspension being imposed (except for any 1 match automatic suspension in respect of a dismissal) the player's or official's club will be advised of the details of the suspension. Suspensions will be published weekly on the IFA website (www.irishfa.com) which clubs are obliged to check for their information. It is each club's responsibility to ensure the eligibility of their players for any match.
- l. A player who is not eligible to participate in a particular match due to being cup tied may not use that match to serve the suspension or part thereof.
- m. 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.
- n. A person may be banned from taking part in any kind of football-related activity (administrative, sports or other).

Article 12: Misconduct by players (outside Law 12 of the Laws of the Game)

- a. A player who is reported for the 1st occasion in the playing season for misconduct which is not described in Law 12 of the Laws of the Game will be sanctioned with a 1 match standard suspension and a £75 fine imposed on the player's club.
- b. A player who is reported for the 2nd occasion in the playing season for misconduct which is not described in Law 12 of the Laws of the Game will be sanctioned with a 3 match standard suspension and a £75 fine imposed on the player's club.
- c. A player who is reported on a 3rd or subsequent occasion in the playing season for misconduct which is not described in Law 12 of the Laws of the Game will be sanctioned with a 6 match standard suspension and a £75 fine imposed on the player's club.
- d. If part of the report relates to cautions or dismissals, that part will be dealt with in accordance with Article 9 and 10 in the IFA Disciplinary Code.
- e. The player and/or his club will be given the opportunity to accept the sanction or to lodge a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge.
- f. In the event that the player and/or his club does not lodge a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge it will be assumed that he has accepted the initial sanction.

Article 13: Misconduct by officials

- a. An official who is reported for the 1st occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a 1 match touchline suspension and a £75 fine imposed on the official's club.
- b. An official who is reported for the 2nd occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a 3 match touchline suspension and a £75 fine imposed on the official's club.
- c. An official who is reported on a 3rd or subsequent occasion in the playing season for misconduct will be sanctioned with a 6 match standard suspension and a £75 fine imposed on the official's club.
- d. The official and/or his club will be given the opportunity to accept the sanction or to lodge a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge.
- e. In the event that the official and/or his club does not lodge a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge it will be assumed that he has accepted the initial sanction.

Article 14: Excessive Misconduct

- a. The Committee may decide a case is worthy of direct consideration by the Committee beyond the application of the initial sanction.
- b. In such cases, the initial sanction will be applied and the player or official will be advised that the case is also being referred to the Committee where he may be required to make a personal appearance before the Committee.
- c. The Committee reserves the right to impose additional sanctions if it is considered that the misconduct of the player or official is of a sufficiently serious nature to warrant a more severe sanction.
- d. All cases resulting in the necessity for a personal hearing will be dealt with as directed in Articles 28 and 29 of the IFA Disciplinary Code.
- e. In all cases of excessive misconduct the Committee will take the appropriate action in accordance with the FIFA Disciplinary Code. If found guilty of excessive misconduct a player or official will be sanctioned as follows:
 - At least a 1 match suspension for unsporting conduct towards an opponent or any other person other than a match official.
 - At least a 4 match suspension for unsporting conduct towards a match official.
 - At least a 2 match suspension for assaulting an opponent or any other person or any other person other than a match official.
 - At least a 6 month suspension for assaulting a match official.
 - At least a 6 match suspension for spitting at an opponent or any other person other than a match official.
 - At least a 12 month suspension for spitting at a match official.
 - A fine may also be imposed in all cases.
- h. The sanctions described in Article 14e may also apply in cases of misconduct against officials of clubs, leagues, divisional associations or the IFA.

Article 15: Media Comments

- a. Whilst recognising that the football public is interested to hear from those involved in the game, certain standards must be upheld in relation to public comments (whether written or verbal) by players and/or officials. A player or official will be liable to censure, fine or suspension, or a combination of such sanctions as the Committee deem fit to impose if they make comments in the media which:
 - Implies bias
 - Questions integrity
 - Are personal or offensive
 - Bring the game into disrepute
- b. Consideration will be given to the actual comments made (rather than any media reporting of such comments) and their context.

Article 16: Unidentified aggressors

If, in the case of violence, it is not possible to identify the perpetrator(s), the Committee may sanction the club to which the aggressors are deemed to belong.

Article 17: Inciting hatred and violence

- a. A player or official who publicly incites others to hatred or violence will be sanctioned with a suspension for no less than twelve months and with a minimum fine of £250.

- b. 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.

Article 18: Provoking the general public

A player or official who provokes the general public during a match will be suspended for two matches and sanctioned with a minimum fine of £250.

Article 19: Ineligibility through suspension

Any player or official who participates in a match whilst being suspended or breaches the terms of his suspension will be suspended for a further 10 matches and the club for which he is participating will be fined £150.

Article 20: Abandonment

If a team is found to have caused the abandonment of a match it will be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £100.

Article 21: Discrimination

- a. A player or official who offends the dignity of a person or group of persons through contemptuous, discriminatory or denigratory words or actions concerning race, colour, language, religion, origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender shall be suspended for at least 5 matches. Furthermore, a stadium ban and a fine of at least £750 shall be imposed. If the perpetrator is an official, the fine shall be at least £1250.
- b. Where several persons (officials and/or players) from the same club simultaneously breach Article 21a or there are other aggravating circumstances, the team concerned may be deducted 3 points for a first offence and six points for a second offence; a further offence may result in demotion to a lower division. In the case of matches in which no points are awarded, the team may be disqualified from the competition.
- c. Where supporters of a team breach Article 21a at a match, a fine of at least £1250 shall be imposed on the club concerned regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight.
- d. Serious offences may be punished with additional sanctions, in particular an order to play a match behind closed doors, the forfeit of a match, a points deduction or disqualification from the competition.

Article 22: Threats

A player or official who intimidates a match official with serious threats will be suspended for a minimum of 3 matches and his club will be fined a minimum of £100.

Article 23: Coercion

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 suspended for a minimum of 3 matches and his club will be fined a minimum of £150.

Article 24: Liability for spectator conduct

- a. The home club is liable for any improper conduct among spectators, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight. Further sanctions may be imposed in the case of serious disturbances.

- b. The visiting club is liable for improper conduct among its own group of spectators, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight. Further sanctions may be imposed in the case of serious disturbances. Spectators occupying the away sector of a stadium are regarded as the visiting club's supporters, unless proven to the contrary.
- c. Improper conduct includes but is not limited to violence towards persons or objects, letting off incendiary devices, throwing missiles, the use of laser pens, displaying insulting slogans in any form, uttering insulting sounds, using offensive gestures or invading the pitch.
- d. The liability described in par. a. and b. also includes matches played on neutral ground, 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.
- e. A club found guilty of improper conduct described in Article 24c will be sanctioned with a warning or a minimum fine of £250. The fine may be increased if a club has been previously sanctioned on 4 occasions for such incidents within the same playing season.
- f. In the event that any serious disturbances occur the club may be sanctioned with a minimum fine of £1000 and possible stadium sanctions. Possible stadium sanctions include playing a match without spectators, playing a match on a neutral ground or a ban on playing in a particular stadium.
- g. In the event of a club being reported for improper conduct among spectators the club will be given the opportunity to request a hearing in connection with the alleged incident(s). Should the club not request a hearing, the Committee will make a decision on the matter in the absence of the club.

Article 25: Repeated infringements

- a. In any case the Committee may increase the sanction to be pronounced as deemed appropriate if an infringement has been repeated within the previous 5 seasons.
- b. Although records of cautions and dismissals are expunged at the conclusion of each season, consideration may be given to cases of a similar nature within the previous 5 seasons.

Article 26: Referee

- a. During matches, disciplinary decisions are taken by the referee.
- b. These decisions are final.
- c. Facts contained in match officials' reports are presumed to be accurate.
- d. Reports may be made individually by match officials or collectively agreed by match officials and supplied through the referee. A collectively agreed report must be signed by the relevant match officials.
- e. Proof of the inaccuracy of the contents of these reports may be provided.
- f. If there is any discrepancy in the reports from the various match officials and there are no means of resolving the different versions of the facts, the referee's report is considered authoritative regarding incidents that occurred on the field of play; the match delegate's report is considered authoritative regarding incidents that occurred outside the field of play.

Article 27: Disciplinary Sanction Challenge (DSC)

- a. A player, official or club may submit a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge in the following circumstances:
 1. In the case of mistaken identity for a player who is cautioned or dismissed in a match.
 2. In the case of mistaken identity for a player who has been reported by the referee as being cautioned or dismissed in a match.
 3. In the case of a sanction imposed under Article 10f, Article 12 or Article 13.
- b. A DSC from a player, official or club must be in writing despatched by special delivery letter to the Secretary of the Disciplinary Committee within 4 days (excluding Sunday) after:
 1. The date the decision was intimated in writing to the person or club concerned.
 2. Or the date of a match (Only in the case of mistaken identity).
- c. A deposit of £75 must be lodged with each DSC which shall be returnable only where the DSC is either upheld or not heard.
- d. In lodging a DSC the player, official or club must state fully in writing the grounds for the request for their DSC and provide the necessary proof in support of the DSC.
- e. On receipt of such challenge, and providing the DSC is in order, the initial sanction will be set aside pending the outcome of the case's consideration by the Committee.
- f. Only complete challenges submitted before the relevant deadlines will be considered by the Committee.
- g. No challenges will be heard against cautions or dismissals except in the case of mistaken identity. In such case, the club must produce their players/witnesses at a disciplinary hearing within one month of submitting their DSC or the DSC may be dismissed.
- h. The Committee retains discretion to deal with each case on its merits.
- i. Should a player or official participate in a match without the appropriate notification from the IFA, having lodged a DSC as set out above, the Committee will impose an appropriate charge of misconduct against the player or official concerned for participating in a match whilst being ineligible.
- j. If the DSC is unsuccessful, the player, official and/or his club may be held liable in all, or in part of, the expenses of the DSC procedure. Should the Committee consider any DSC 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 the power to deal with the player, official and/or club as it deems appropriate.
- k. A DSC may be withdrawn by a player, official or club prior to the hearing of the case but before the original suspension was due to commence by notifying the Secretary of such withdrawal in writing. Upon receipt of such notification by the Secretary, the DSC will be deemed to be abandoned and the original decision against which the player, official or club had challenged be imposed. Upon the withdrawal of a DSC, the DSC deposit will be automatically forfeited. The player's or official's club may be held liable in all or part for the expenses of the DSC procedure.

Article 28: Personal Hearings

- a. When a player, official or club lodges a Disciplinary Sanction Challenge or when the Committee requests the attendance of a player, official or club at a hearing the club will be advised of the date, venue and time of the hearing. The club will be given 7 days notice of the details of the hearing except in the case of exceptional circumstances.

- b. The match official(s) concerned may be required to attend the hearing at the discretion of the Committee
- c. In the event that the player, official or club is unable to attend on the advised meeting date, the hearing may be postponed on one occasion in the case of exceptional circumstances, after which the Committee reserves the right to deal with the case. The Committee also reserves the right to deal with the case if a player, official or club fails to attend a hearing without prior notice of 48 hours or does not wish to avail of the opportunity to attend.
- d. In any hearing the player, official or club will be required to submit the composition of their delegation for the hearing in writing to the Secretary of the Disciplinary Committee no later than 48 hours prior to the hearing.
- e. Television evidence may be used to examine incidents involving players, officials or spectators, in the event that reports are submitted. It is open to the player, official or club to refer to such evidence in his submission. The Committee may provide video footage in any case. The Committee will decide whether the video footage provided will be used in the hearing.

Article 29: Procedures for the Conducting of Personal Hearings

- a. The Disciplinary Committee comprises 12 members. The quorum for the Committee is 5 members. A member is obliged to retire from the consideration of any case if it involves their club or a club in the same division as their club. Neither shall they vote nor direct any vote to be cast with regard to such a matter. The recording of an abstention by a member shall not be considered as a retirement from the consideration of any case.
- b. The player, official or club and any nominee, who may accompany and/or represent them, shall be admitted to the hearing, together with the referee and any other relevant match official or other such person who submitted a report on the case in question.
- c. The Committee may require the attendance at the hearing of any witness. 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 that witness' evidence as is made apparent to it in any other form.
- d. At the commencement of the hearing, the Chairman shall confirm the identities of the persons admitted to the hearing and introduce the Committee members. The player, official or club will be required to give good reason for any objection to the composition of the Committee.
- e. 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 severity of the allegations made against them.
- f. The player, official or club and/or their representative(s) shall be given the opportunity to comment upon and supplement his written submission to the committee.
- g. The referee and any other person in support of the charge shall be given the opportunity to comment upon and supplement his report.
- h. At any time, the Chairman, and through him, members of the Committee may ask questions of any of the parties. The Committee may draw such inferences as it considers appropriate from the failure of the person charged to give evidence or answer a question put to him.

- i. Evidence from any witness called by the player, official, club or the Committee may be heard.
- j. Any television evidence deemed appropriate by the Committee shall be viewed in the presence of the player, official and/or club representative. (See Article 28e in the IFA Disciplinary Code)
- k. The committee shall consider the evidence and submissions presented to it and determine whether the player, official or club has been found guilty of misconduct or not. The committee may, if required, request the presence of the parties again for further questioning.
- l. After reaching its decision, the committee shall recall the player, official and/or club and their representative(s). If the player, official or club has been found guilty of misconduct, they and their representative(s) shall be advised of the decision of the committee, but not the rationale employed in arriving at the decision, which shall subsequently be confirmed in writing to them.
- m. The player, official and/or club shall be advised that they have a right of appeal to the Appeals Board of the IFA and shall be provided with the relevant details. This information shall also be confirmed in writing to them.
- n. If the player, official or club has not been found guilty of misconduct the hearing will be declared closed.
- o. In the event that a player or official carries out an act of misconduct or disrespect at a hearing or immediately afterwards, they may be additionally sanctioned with a minimum 3 match suspension. A minimum fine of £75 may be imposed on the club of the player or official.

Article 30: Misconduct which has come to the attention of the Committee other than by means of a match official's report

- a. A club submitting a claim of misconduct about any player, official or club MUST:
 - Submit their claim in writing despatched by special delivery letter to the Secretary of the Disciplinary Committee within 72 hours (excluding Sunday) from the alleged misconduct taking place.
 - A deposit of £75 shall be lodged with each claim which shall be returnable only where there is a case to answer.
 - In lodging a claim the club must state fully in writing outlining their claim and including all relevant information to substantiate their claim.
- b. A League, Divisional Association, Committee, Committee member or department within the IFA submitting such a claim of misconduct will not be required to adhere to the procedure detailed in Article 30a. However, such a claim must be submitted in writing with a full explanation of the claim within 7 days of the occurrence of the misconduct.
- c. All claims of misconduct from a club will require full co-operation from the claimant.
- d. The Association will, in the first instance, confirm to the player, official and/or club, that the matter is being referred to the Committee to determine whether or not there is a case to answer.
- e. If the Committee decides that there is no case to answer, the player, official or club will be advised that no further action will be taken.
- f. If the Committee decides that there is a case to answer, the Association will confirm to the player, official or club that they are being called to appear before the Committee.
- g. All claims resulting in the necessity for a personal hearing will be dealt with as directed in Articles 28 and 29 of the IFA Disciplinary Code.

- h. Where a case is delegated by the Executive Board the Committee may impose any sanction deemed appropriate.

Article 31: Serious Offences

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

Article 32: Appeals Board

Appeals against decisions of the Committee must be lodged as directed in Article 21 of the IFA's Articles of Association.

Article 33: Divisional Association's Disciplinary Codes

The Divisional Associations must adopt this code and the associated fines and sanctions for the purpose of harmonising disciplinary sanctions.