

APPEALS COMMITTEE

Jamie Robinson (Referee) v IFA Disciplinary Committee

John Greer (Chair), Ciara McReynolds, Ian Beggs,

The Appeals Board would firstly wish to place on record its thanks to all parties in the appeal for their co-operation. In line with the procedures adopted since the Covid-19 pandemic, this matter was considered by the Appeals Board on written submission provided by the parties.

This appeal arises from an incident which occurred at the conclusion of the match between Crusaders and Glentoran played at Seaview on 21 January, following which a complaint against match referee Jamie Robinson was raised by Stephen Baxter (Manager of Crusaders FC).

This matter was considered at a hearing by the IFA Disciplinary Committee at which the referee team on the evening in question and representatives of Crusaders FC, including the General Manager, First team manager and Safety officer were in attendance and gave evidence.

The outcome of the hearing was that Mr Robinson was sanctioned with a suspension of two match weeks for unsportsmanlike conduct.

This appeal by Mr Robinson is based on four grounds – (i) Unreasonableness; (ii) Procedural impropriety (iii) Illegality (error of law) (iv) Policy considerations

It is not the role of the Appeals Board to conduct a re-hearing of the evidence heard by the Disciplinary Committee. The Disciplinary Committee heard evidence from many witnesses, including the Appellant, and reached a finding of fact upon which the sanction was based. Whilst the Appellant would have liked the Disciplinary Committee to have reached a different decision, the Appellant's argument that the decision was unreasonable or irrational and the finding of fact unfounded is not persuasive.

Nor is there is compelling evidence to support the contention that there were procedural irregularities prior to or during the conduct of the hearing.

Determining 'unsporting conduct' is not an arbitrary test and remains a matter of judgement based upon the facts of the particular case. Having heard the evidence it cannot be an error in law for the Disciplinary Committee to have reached the assessment they did.

Whilst there is no doubt that match officials require to be properly protected and there is no place in the game for the abuse of referees, officials must remain responsible for their own actions in the light of all else that is going on. The fact that the situation the Appellant found himself in may have been antagonising and may not have been of his own making is not a defence to how he decides to conduct himself in the circumstances.

The Appeals Board finds no persuasive grounds for overturning the decision of the Disciplinary Committee and accordingly this appeal is dismissed and the original sanction reimposed as from 25th April..