

IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

APPEALS COMMITTEE

In the matter of an appeal by **AN UNNAMED PLAYER** from Glentoran Football Club ('the Appellant') against a decision made by the **IFA DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE** ('the Respondent')

Appeal Board:

Carley Shields

Carla Dallas

Kieran McMahon

Attendees:

1. The Appellant was represented at the hearing by Jamie Bryson, also in attendance was the Appellant himself, Darragh Mackin, (legal advisor to the Appellant) appearing briefly to address the matter of jurisdiction and David Bryson (Coach).
2. The Respondent was represented at the hearing by Neil Gillam (Vice-chair of the Respondent), also in attendance on behalf of the Respondent was Leigh Sillery.
3. The Board thanked the parties for their attendance at the hearing.
4. It is to be noted that the Appellant is not being named in this appeal as they are a minor.

Background:

5. The appeal follows from a decision of the Respondent made in respect of an Obvious Error Challenge arising from a red card issued to the Appellant on Friday 14 March 2025.
6. The Appellant was dismissed by the referee in the 79th minute for a challenge on an opponent, deemed by the referee to be serious foul play. In accordance with Article 30.2 of the Disciplinary Code ('the Code'), the Appellant submitted an Obvious Error Challenge in accordance with the procedures as set out in Articles 30.2.2 and 30.2.3 of the Code.
7. The Respondent determined, pursuant to Article 30.2.7 of the Code, that the Appellant's challenge to the dismissal for serious foul play was deemed to be have been unsuccessful.
8. On 25 March 2025, a Notice of Complaint was issued against the Appellant's Club imposing a £250 fine, as a result of a breach of Article 30.2.8 of the Code.
9. The Appellant pursued the following grounds of appeal:
 - (i) apparent bias
 - (ii) irrationality
 - (iii) errors of law in (a) purporting to prevent any appeal and in (b) deciding to issue an additional sanction which is in itself irrational.

10. The Appeal Board listened carefully to all submissions made on behalf of both parties.

The Appeal Board considered each ground of appeal in turn:

- (i) In relation to the first ground of apparent bias – the Appeal Board is content that there is no merit in this ground of appeal as the identity of the Vice Chair of the Respondent was confirmed to the Appellant prior to the hearing and should have satisfied any concerns in this regard.
- (ii) The second ground of appeal - irrationality – is made by the Appellant as it says that the findings of fact of the Respondent are unsustainable in light of evidence presented. The Appellant takes issue, in particular, with what the Respondent says the video evidence showed.
- (iii) The Board took time following the oral submissions to view two videos of the tackle, one at full speed and the other, a slowed down version. The Appeal Board is of the view that they cannot say that the Respondent made an incorrect decision.
- (iv) The Respondent has clearly set out in its letter of 24 March 2025 how it reached its decision and it can be seen clearly from the video footage that the Player made a tackle that endangered the safety of an opponent, satisfying the IFAB Laws of the Game definition of serious foul play.
- (v) It is stated in the IFAB Laws of the Game that *'a tackle or challenge that endangers the safety of an opponent or uses excessive force or brutality must be sanctioned as serious foul play. Any player who lunges at an opponent in challenging for the ball from the front, from the side or from behind using one or both legs, with excessive force of endangers the safety of an opponent is guilty of serious foul play.'*
- (vi) In relation to ground of appeal (iii)(a) – error of law in that the Respondent purported to prevent any appeal. This issue was determined outside of this hearing, pursuant to settlement terms agreed between the parties.
- (vii) In relation to ground of appeal (iii)(b) – error of law in deciding to issue an additional sanction which in itself was irrational – this is not a matter for the Appeal Board at this juncture. The Respondent determined *'that a Notice of Complaint would be issued to Glentoran Football Club under its powers outlined in Article 1.9(iv)(c) of the Code in relation Article 30.2.8'*. Article 1.9 of the Code sets out what the Respondent shall have the power to do once matters properly come before it and, in this case, the matter was properly before it under Article 30.2 of the Code.
- (viii) Article 30.2.8 states that *'Should the Committee consider any Obvious Error Notification/Challenge to be of a frivolous nature and/or an abuse of process merely to release a player or official from suspension to enable them to participate in a match they shall power to deal with the player AND official AND OR club as it deems appropriate.'* This Notice of Complaint must be challenged in the appropriate way, and attention was drawn in the Notice as to how it may be challenged if not accepted.

11. Therefore, in accordance with Article 14(6)(a) of the IFA's Articles of Association, the Board dismisses this appeal and affirms the decision of the Respondent whose decision is appealed against.

Dated: 29 March 2025

Carley Shields

On behalf of the Appeal Board