

IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

APPEALS COMMITTEE

In the matter of an appeal by **GLENAVON FC** ('the Appellant') against a decision made by the **IFA DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE** ('the Respondent')

Appeal Board:

Carley Shields

Mervyn Wheatley

David Lennox

Attendees:

1. Given the nature of the appeal being one relating to an Obvious Error Challenge, there were no parties or representatives in attendance to be consistent with Article 30.2.5 of the Disciplinary Code.
2. Mr Wheatley advised the Board that he is currently the Chair of the Mid Ulster FA, of which the Appellant is a member. He confirmed that he has no connections whatsoever with the Appellant. In the circumstances, the Board determined that there was no conflict.
3. The Appeal Board considered the written submissions of both parties and reviewed the video footage originally viewed by the Respondent.
4. The Board thanks the parties for their written submissions.

Background:

5. The appeal is against a decision of the Respondent communicated by letter dated 28 August 2025 in relation to an Obvious Error Challenge submitted by the Appellant pursuant to Article 30.2 of the Disciplinary Code.
6. The decision was to deem the Obvious Error Challenge unsuccessful by a majority decision of three to one. The Respondent determined that the evidential burden which rests on the Appellant and the player to show that the match official made an obvious error was not met.
7. The challenge relates to a game played on 23 August 2025 involving the Appellant and Coleraine FC. In the 76th minute, the referee sent off the Appellant's number 19, Mr Lomboto. The match report records '*(76-S2 Violent conduct. After awarding a free kick to Coleraine after a foul by Mr Lomboto, he picks the ball up. As Mr Kane of Coleraine goes to retrieve the ball I have witnessed a clear movement of the arm of Mr Lomboto and striking Mr Kane in the face. Subsequently then was sent from the field of play.)*'

Points raised on appeal:

8. The Appellant made the following key points:
 - a. There is a discrepancy between the Referee's report and the video evidence. The Referee's report states that Mr Lomboto made '*a clear movement of the arm... striking Mr*

Kane in the face', whereas the Appellant says that the footage shows that there was no strike to the face.

- b. The IFAB Definition of Violent Conduct states *'Violent conduct is when a player uses or attempts to use excessive force or brutality against an opponent when not challenging for the ball. In addition, a player who...deliberately strikes an opponent on the head or face with the hand or arm is guilty of violent conduct unless the force used was negligible.'*
 - c. At most, the action constitutes a push to the upper body in a non-challenging context and does not amount to violent conduct and any force was negligible.
 - d. The Respondent erred in finding that no obvious error occurred.
9. The Respondent made the following key points:
- a. The Respondent considered only the evidence provided by the Appellant and player, including video evidence. After several viewings of the evidence, deliberations commenced which led to the decision.
 - b. There have been no grounds of appeal identified. The Appellant states that the Respondent erred in their findings but offers nothing to support same.
 - c. The Appeal Board should be slow to intervene unless they determine that the process followed by the Respondent was flawed or contrary to the principles of fairness and natural justice.
 - d. The decision reached was fair and reasonable. It falls squarely within the range of reasonable outcomes which the Respondent or any other person with the appropriate extent of competence would have reached.

Analysis:

- 10. In accordance with Article 14(3) of the IFA's Articles of Association, an appeal hearing shall not be conducted as a re-hearing.
- 11. The grounds for the appeal are the same as those already heard by the Respondent. The Appellant has failed to explain why the Respondent's decision was wrong.
- 12. The Respondent's letter of 28 August 2025 sets out clearly the steps that were taken to consider the Obvious Error Challenge.
- 13. Furthermore, Article 30.2.1 of the Disciplinary Code states *'For the avoidance of doubt, it is the Referee's disciplinary decision (sending-off) during a fixture which must be viewed as the determining factor and trigger for a player, club or official to lodge an Obvious Error Challenge, not the Referee's Comet match report and accompanying sanction.'* (Our emphasis added.)
- 14. Article 30.2.7 of the Disciplinary Code states *'After considering the evidence, the Committee will decide whether the claim is rejected or successful. A claim will only be successful where the Committee is satisfied that the Referee made an obvious error in dismissing the player or official.'*

15. The Appeal Board watched the footage seen by the Respondent and notes that the Referee was well positioned and had a good view of the incident.
16. Having viewed the footage and considered the submissions from both parties, the Appeal Board is of the opinion that it has not been presented with any evidence to suggest that the Respondent's procedure was flawed or that it reached an unreasonable decision.

Decision:

17. Given the above, in accordance with Article 14(a) of the IFA's Articles of Association, the Appeal Board has decided to affirm the decision of the Respondent and the appeal fails.
18. The suspension imposed upon Mr Lomboto should therefore be reinstated from Monday 15 September 2025.

Dated: 9 September 2025

Carley Shields

Vice Chair

On behalf of the Appeal Board