

IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

APPEALS COMMITTEE

In the matter of an appeal by **KELVIN OLD BOYS FC** ('the Appellant') against a decision made by the **NORTHERN AMATEUR FOOTBALL LEAGUE** ('the Respondent')

Appeal Board:

Carley Chapman

Simon Walls

Paul Jackson

Attendees:

1. The Appellant was represented by Jamie Bryson (Representative), William Laird (Club Secretary) and Michael Surgeon (Club Chairman) and the Respondent was represented by David McCarthy (General Secretary) and Paul Causby (Regulatory Committee Member).
2. The Appeal Board thanks the parties for their attendance and for their written and oral submissions.

Background:

3. This is an Appeal against a decision communicated by the Respondent to the Appellant on 12 May 2026 to fine the Appellant £100 and to award the fixture to their opponent, St Matthews FC ('St Matthews'), for playing an ineligible player during their match on 21 March 2026.
4. The Comet start list listed 'Lennon Ashwood' as number 2 for the Appellant. St Matthews lodged a protest that the Appellant had Mr Ashwood listed as number 2 against their team but also listed as number 6 in another match on the same date.
5. The Appellant accepted that the wrong 'Lennon' had been selected on Comet for the fixture against St Matthews. The Appellant explained that it had two players named 'Lennon' at the club, Lennon Ashwood and Lennon Hynes. The Appellant appeals on the basis that the error was merely technical, that the player who played against St Matthews was eligible, and the only penalty available is that under Bye-Law B Rule 5.2.1 of the Bye-Laws of the Northern Amateur Football League Limited ('the Rules').
6. Bye-Law B Rule 2.1 states: *"Any team playing an ineligible player or players (whether through non-registration, non-compliance with Player Listing Instructions or otherwise) shall be fined £100.00 for each ineligible player played and shall forfeit any points won in all matches in which the player(s) played. In all matches in which teams forfeit points won as a result of playing an ineligible player, the match opponents will be awarded a 3-0 victory, unless the score registered in the match was greater than 3-0 to the match opponents."*
7. Bye-Law B Rule 5.2.1 states: *"The Secretary or other Responsible Official of each competing Club shall, 10 minutes before the commencement of the match, CONFIRM the full names of players with corresponding shirt numbers on the Comet system and must certify the accuracy of the information supplied. Failure to confirm the Player Listing will incur a £100.00 fine."*

The PLAYER LISTING may be inspected on the match day by the Secretary or other Responsible Official of either competing Club. A club submitting a falsified match listing shall be fined a minimum of £250.00 and the club Official submitting such listing will be suspended for a minimum of twelve months."

Points raised on appeal:

8. The Appellant made the following key points:
 - a. Bye-Law B Rule 1 exhaustively defines eligibility criteria, if that is satisfied, then the player is eligible.
 - b. Bye-Law B Rule 2.1 relates to the playing of players who are ineligible. Bye-Law B Rule 5.2.1 deals with player listing but doesn't speak to eligibility.
 - c. The player who played the game was eligible and it was accepted that the error was technical in nature and inadvertent.
 - d. The Respondent erred in treating an error in the Comet listing as rendering the player ineligible, rather the appropriate punishment for the error was provided for in Bye-Law B Rule 5.2.1. It is therefore accepted that a £100 fine is the correct punishment, but not the deduction of points.
 - e. There is a difference between Registration and Listing. A failure in the former does render ineligible, a failure in the latter does not. Had the players name been correct in the player listing on Comet there would be no appeal.
 - f. It is acknowledged that there is a tension between Bye-Law B Rule 2.1 and Bye-Law B Rule 5.2.1 given the inclusion of the phrase '*whether through non-registration, non-compliance with Player Listing Instructions or otherwise*' in Bye-Law B Rule 2.1, therefore where there is a doubt in the interpretation of the Rules it should be resolved in favour of the player/club.
9. The Respondent made the following key points:
 - a. Registration and listing are different steps, but the appeal does not turn on that difference. Bye-Law B Rule 2.1 specifically brings non-compliance with Player Listing Instructions within the ineligible player rule. The Appellant's argument would require those words to be read out of Bye-Law B Rule 2.1, which the Respondent submits should not be done.
 - b. The purpose of the player listing requirement is obvious and important. The Comet listing is the official record of which players participate in a fixture and in which shirt numbers. It allows the opposing club, the referee, the League and the disciplinary authorities to know who actually played. It also allows eligibility checks to be carried out properly.
 - c. If a club can list Player A, play Player B, and later avoid Bye-Law B Rule 2.1 by saying that Player B was registered with the club, the player listing process is undermined and creates serious problems. For example, if the player who actually played received a red card, the disciplinary record would attach to the player listed on Comet, not the player who actually played and committed the offence.

- d. Bye-Law B Rule 5.2.1 does not say that an inaccurate listing can never result in an ineligible player decision, nor does it say that the fine for failing to confirm a listing is the only sanction where the wrong player is listed and a different player plays. The more specific consequence for playing an ineligible player is found in Bye-Law B Rule 2.1.
- e. In reaching its decision, the Respondent considered all relevant correspondence in relation to the complaint by St Matthews, including the team sheets, the Appellant's explanation, the Comet records and the Rules and accepted that the error may have been administrative.

Decision:

- 10. The Appeal Board has carefully considered the arguments raised by both parties.
- 11. The Appeal Board is of the opinion that the Respondent correctly interpreted the Rules in relation to the complaint made by St Matthews against the Appellant.
- 12. The Appeal Board agrees with the Respondent that Bye-Law B Rule 2.1 sets out the consequence where a club plays an ineligible player, including where that ineligibility arises through non-compliance with Player Listing Instructions.
- 13. Therefore, pursuant to Article 14(6)(a) of the IFA's Articles of Association the Appeal Board affirms the decision of the Respondent and dismisses the appeal.

Dated: 25 August 2026

Carley Chapman

Vice Chair

On behalf of the Appeal Board